

THE F. B. I. — SCOTLAND YARD — NORTHWEST MOUNTED — SECRET SERVICE

MANHUNT

No. 4

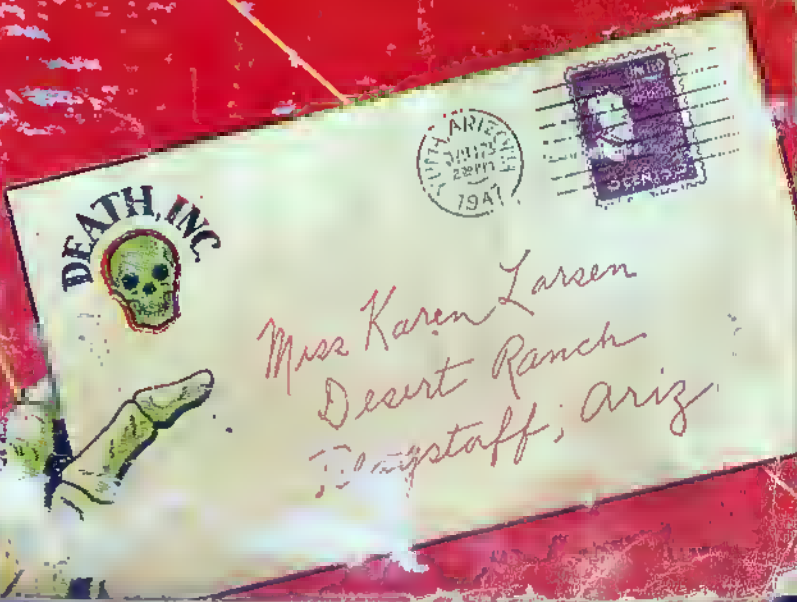
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RED LETTER DAY

SEE NEXT PAGE





WEB COMIC UNIVERSE.COM

RED LETTER DAY

by Gardner F. Fox

THE envelope came first, brought by the mailman. It bore a stamp and the familiar seal of the local post office. After the envelope—came death!

Karen Larsen crumpled to the floor of her big desert home when she saw it. In the upper left-hand corner were the words: *Death, Inc.* and beneath them, the odd imprint of the weird skullface with the hollow, haunting eyesockets. A shaft of sunlight played across it, touched the quivering mouth of the frightened girl, shadowed the *sahuaro* cactus in the tiled courtyard.

Lee San, her Chinese cook, came running on padded feet. "Missy sick? Me help Missy her room?"

"No, Lee. Just tell Edouard to get the car out. I'm going into town—to the F.B.I.!"

* * *

Special agent Jim Fallon was at Karen Larsen's side that night as she reentered the patio of the sprawling desert hacienda. A big yellow moon flooded the splashing waters of the stunted fountain. In the distance a horse whinnied. A lizard slithered over tile.

"One hour to go," the girl whispered. "One hour . . . before I die!"

"Miss Larsen, you will not die. I promise you that!"

She whirled on him. The moonbeams fell on her quivering lips, on the red-nailed fingers she clasped on her handbag. "How can you tell me that? You know what *Death, Inc.* can do! Eleven killings in the past year. Bought and paid for by—whom? Men who'll kill another man for fifty dollars! For someone who is never seen!"

"They always send those death's-head letters. And on the day those letters are delivered, the person for whom they are meant—*dies!* Every time. They've never failed! Why will I be the exception?"

Her fingernails dug deep into Jim Fallon's arm as she bit off a scream with her white

teeth. Seemingly all around them, from fountain and tiles and roof—rose the haunting laughter of a madman! It mocked them, taunted their puny efforts.

"You see?" the girl cried wildly, eyes searching his. "They're all around us. They can kill me whenever they want. They aren't human. They're devils . . . or ghosts . . . !"

Jim Fallon held her up with hands under her elbows. He snapped his speech short, hoping to jab her into courage. "You agreed to this. You said you'd help me catch them. I could have kept you overnight in safety, with a dozen guards. But you agreed that I couldn't let you stay there forever. That someday they'd get you . . . alone . . . unprotected!"

"Yes," she whimpered, shuddering. "Yes. . ."

"All right, then. Keep your chin up, and let's go get 'em!"

Fallon spoke with an assurance he was far from feeling. The strangely quiet hacienda, the glowing moon, the eerie silence after that wild laughter, ran cold ripples of tension down his back. He put his hand on his service revolver under his coat and felt better.

Karen Larsen said, "They want to kill me because my newspaper scoop sent Rat Marley to the chair. And they're afraid that I'll stumble onto their own murder ring . . . and have *them* sent up!"

Footsteps sounded in the darkness, then faded. Karen cried out. "Lee San, is that you? Lee! Oh, Lee!"

There was only the moonlight and the stillness to answer her. Fallon lifted his gun out of the holster and held it in front of him as he walked forward into a little tiled alleyway between two of the hacienda buildings. Karen followed him.

He could hear her footsteps, tap-tap-tapping . . .

She choked, gurgled . . .

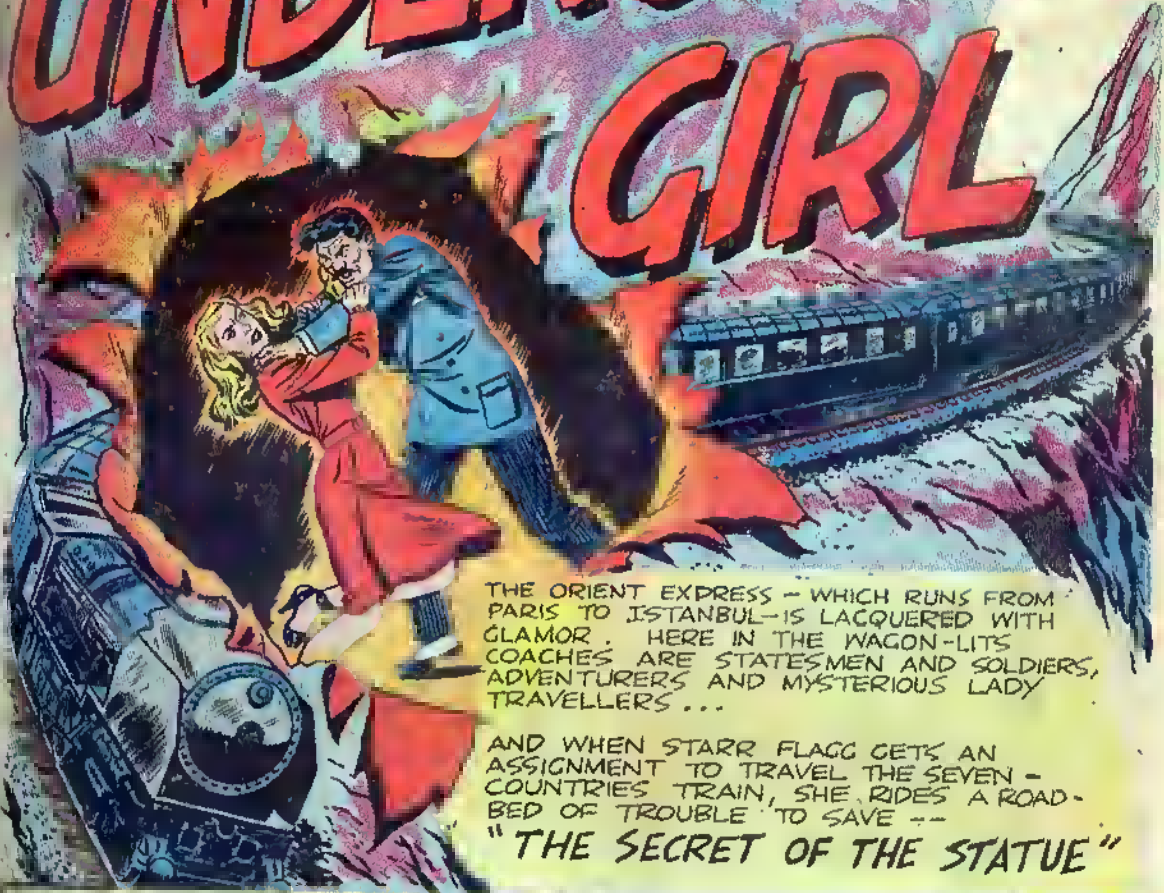
Fallon whirled. A noose had dropped silently from the sloping roof . . . was tight about her throat . . . was lifting her upwards into the air!

The Federal agent leaped. His gun dropped as he jumped for the rope above the girl's head. He caught it, swung about on it, tugging down. The girl crumpled on the tile as he dragged the noose downward, slowly, inexorably. She clawed at the noose, loosening it. He could hear her gulping in air through lips that were bright red in a suddenly bloodless face.

The rope came away from its anchor. Fallon looked up. A man was falling from a flat roof, one end of the rope still in his right hand. His left hand held an automatic. The gun spit red flame and lead at Fallon.

(Continued on inside back cover)

UNDERCOVER GIRL



THE ORIENT EXPRESS - WHICH RUNS FROM PARIS TO ISTANBUL - IS LACQUERED WITH GLAMOR. HERE IN THE WAGON-LITS COACHES ARE STATESMEN AND SOLDIERS, ADVENTURERS AND MYSTERIOUS LADY TRAVELLERS...

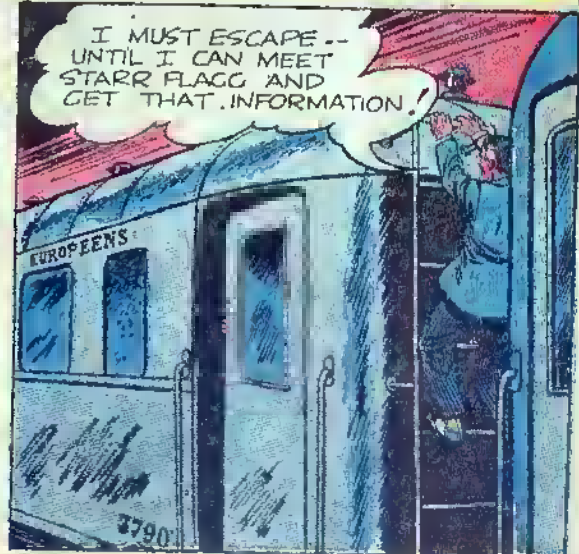
AND WHEN STARR FLAGG GETS AN ASSIGNMENT TO TRAVEL THE SEVEN - COUNTRIES TRAIN, SHE RIDES A ROAD - BED OF TROUBLE TO SAVE --

"THE SECRET OF THE STATUE"

TWO HOURS AFTER LEAVING THE GARE DE LYON A MAN ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS CRIES OUT IN ALARM...



ALMOST -- GOT ME!



I MUST ESCAPE -- UNTIL I CAN MEET STARR FLAGG AND GET THAT INFORMATION!

MANHUNT

SNEAKING ENGLISH DOG! ONE GOOD SHOT AT HIM AND IT WILL BE ME THAT MEETS THE AMERIKANSKI SPY!

YOU DON'T GO ANY FARTHER, OLD FELLOW!

GRRAAK!

HIGH IN THE RAPID AIR OF THE SWISS ALPS, THE TWO INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS BATTLE TO THE DEATH....

THE KREMLIN WOULD NOT FORGIVE ME IF YOU MET THAT GIRL...

GOT TO DO BETTER THAN THIS TO PREVENT ME!

A FOUL BLOW, A SCREAM -- AND A TWISTING FIGURE HURTTLES DOWNWARD TO ITS DOOM...

AAAAGGHH

IN A PRIVATE COACH--

THAT'S ODD! I THOUGHT I HEARD A MAN CRY OUT-- BUT MY IMAGINATION MUST BE PLAYING TRICKS!

I'M NERVOUS FROM CARRYING POTENTIAL DYNAMITE LIKE THIS GOLDEN STATUE WITH ME. I WISH, JONES-FARR WOULD SHOW UP!

OH, WELL. MAYBE A GOOD MEAL WILL SET ME BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK. I'D BETTER HURRY. THE FOOD IN SWITZERLAND'S THE BEST IN ALL EUROPE THESE DAYS!

MANHUNT

ON THE ROOF OF THE SWAYING TRAIN . . .

GOODBYE, THOMAS JONES-FARR!
I -- BORIS ORRSKI -- WILL NOW
TAKE YOUR PLACE TO MEET
THE GIRL, STARR FLAGG!

HERE SHE IS NOW,
GOING FORWARD TO THE
DINING CAR ---

THE LION SENDS
THE EAGLE, BEST
WISHES!

THE LION FOR
ENGLAND, THE
EAGLE FOR THE
UNITED STATES.
YOU MUST BE
JONES-FARR.

I'LL GIVE YOU
THE STATUETTE,
IF YOU'LL COME
TO MY STATEROOM.

THANK YOU, MISS
FLAGG. I'LL TURN
IT OVER TO MY
GOVERNMENT AT
ONCE!

TO HIS GOVERNMENT?
HE'S SUPPOSED TO
DELIVER THAT STATUE
TO THE AMERICAN
CONSUL IN SAUDI-ARABIA!
THEY THOUGHT THE
DESERT TRIP TOO
MUCH FOR A GUY LIKE
ME!

MAYBE JONES-FARR IS A
"FARR" CRY FROM BEING
WHO HE PRETENDS! I'D
BETTER TAKE A
LOOK-SEE!

PESTE! NOT A NAIL OR A
SCREW TO BE SEEN.
NOTHING SEEMS TO TURN,
HOW CAN ANYONE OPEN
THIS TO FIND OUT THE
SECRET IT HIDES?

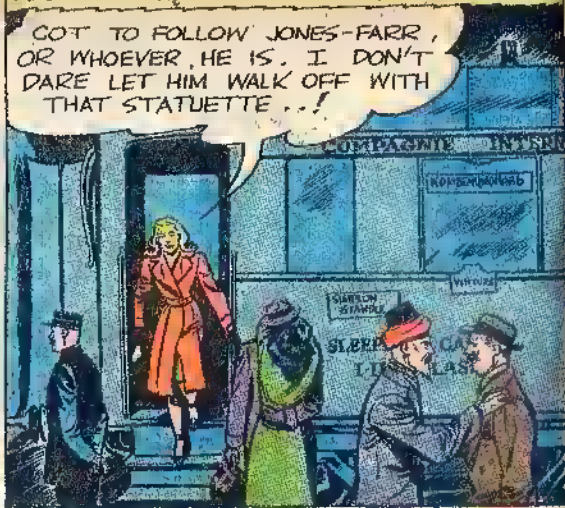
MANHUNT

THROUGH BULGARIA AND TURKEY SPEEDS THE FLYING SIMPLON-ORIENT



AND INTO THE CROWDED CITY OF ISTANBUL

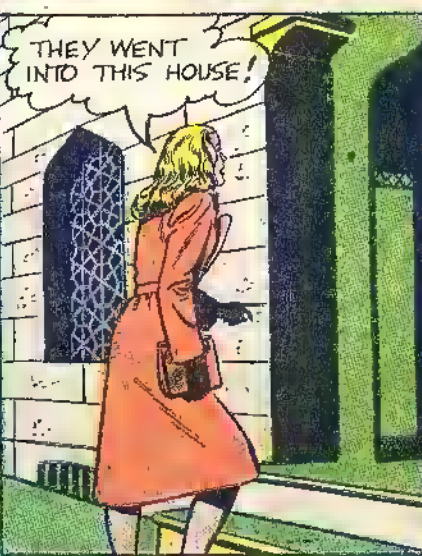
GOT TO FOLLOW JONES-FARR, OR WHOEVER HE IS. I DON'T DARE LET HIM WALK OFF WITH THAT STATUETTE ...!



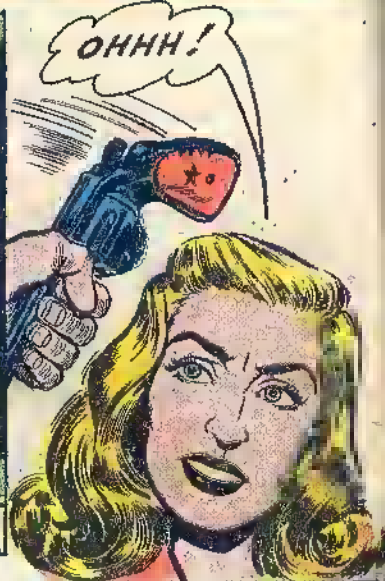
HE'S MEETING A RUSSIAN OFFICER! THE REAL JONES-FARR WOULD STAY AWAY FROM HIM AS IF HE HAD THE MUMPS!



THEY WENT INTO THIS HOUSE!



OH!!!

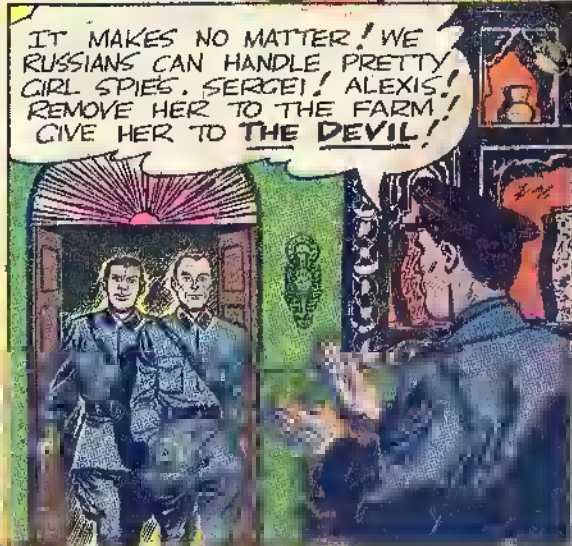


FOOLISH PIG! YOU LET THE WOMAN KNOW YOU WEREN'T JONES-FARR -- OR SHE WOULD NOT HAVE TRAILED US FROM THE MART!



I NEVER GUESSED SHE KNEW!

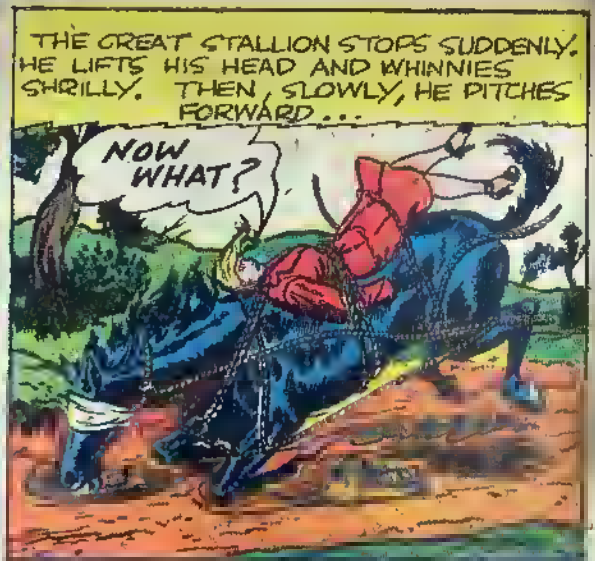
IT MAKES NO MATTER! WE RUSSIANS CAN HANDLE PRETTY GIRL SPIES. SERGEI! ALEXIS! REMOVE HER TO THE FARM! GIVE HER TO THE DEVIL!



MANHUNT



CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO STOP THIS FIEND! HE'LL EITHER CRUSH ME BY ROLLING ON ME -- OR CUT ME TO RIBBONS BY RUNNING NEAR TREES...



THE GREAT STALLION STOPS SUDDENLY. HE LIFTS HIS HEAD AND WHINNIES SHRILLY. THEN, SLOWLY, HE PITCHES FORWARD...

NOW WHAT?

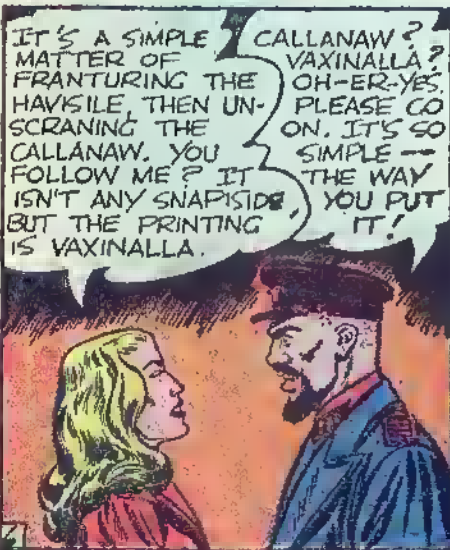


LUCKY FOR THE KREMLIN I AM THE BEST SHOT IN THE ARMY. IT WAS NO EASY TASK TO KILL THAT GALLOPING HORSE!

ALL RUSSIA WILL THANK YOU -- IF THE AMERIKANSKI KNOWS THE SECRET OF THE STATUE!

HOW DO YOU OPEN THAT STATUE?

WHY -- COULDN'T YOU FIGURE THAT ONE OUT? THAT'S VERY EASY!



IT'S A SIMPLE MATTER OF FRANTURING THE HAVISILE, THEN UNSCRANING THE CALLANAW. YOU FOLLOW ME? IT ISN'T ANY SNAPSIDE BUT THE PRINTING IS VAXINALLA.

CALLANAW? VAXINALLA? OH-ER-YES. PLEASE GO ON. IT'S SO SIMPLE -- THE WAY YOU PUT IT!



IF I CAN HOLD THEM WITH THIS DOUBLE-TALK LONG ENOUGH, I MAY BE ABLE TO WRIGGLE OUT OF THIS!



I'LL DEMONSTRATE WHAT I MEAN. FIRST OF ALL I NEED A FEW CHEMICALS...

ANYTHING AT ALL! BUT YOU MUST NOT PULL ANY TRICKS!

MANHUNT

NOW TO FILL THE CHEMICAL SPRAY GUN...

LUCKY THEY DIDN'T RECOGNIZE THOSE CHEMICALS AS THE FORMULA FOR LAUGHING GAS!

THAT CHEMICAL WILL OPEN THE STATUE, EH?

IT WILL DO MORE THAN THAT--

SHE HAS FOOLED US! GRAB HER...!

GOT TO HOLD MY BREATH-- LONG ENOUGH FOR THAT GAS TO AFFECT THEM--

I GOT-- HA! HA! OH! HA! HA! HA!

By Stan Whitney

I RODE A FLYING STALLION, SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH THIS 'FLYING MARE' WRESTLING CRIP!

HAW! HAW! HAW! HO! HO! HO! HO!

HA! HA! HA!

I'LL DUCK WHILE THE BOYS ARE HELPLESS WITH HILARITY. THEY MAY HAVE MEN WATCHING THE STREET SO I'LL GO BY THE ROOF!

I'LL BE SAFE PRETTY SOON -- TEE-HEE! HEE-HEE!

POOR STARR -- IT SOUNDS AS IF SHE INHALED A LITTLE OF THAT GAS HERSELF...

IF THEY'D ONLY KNOWN THAT THE STATUE'S OUTER CRUST IS RUBBER! IF THEY'D DISSOLVED IT IN BENZOL, THE WRITING INSIDE IT ON THE METAL FRAME WOULD BE REVEALED --- HA! HA! HA!

THESE AMERICANS! CRAZY!

SPACE ACE

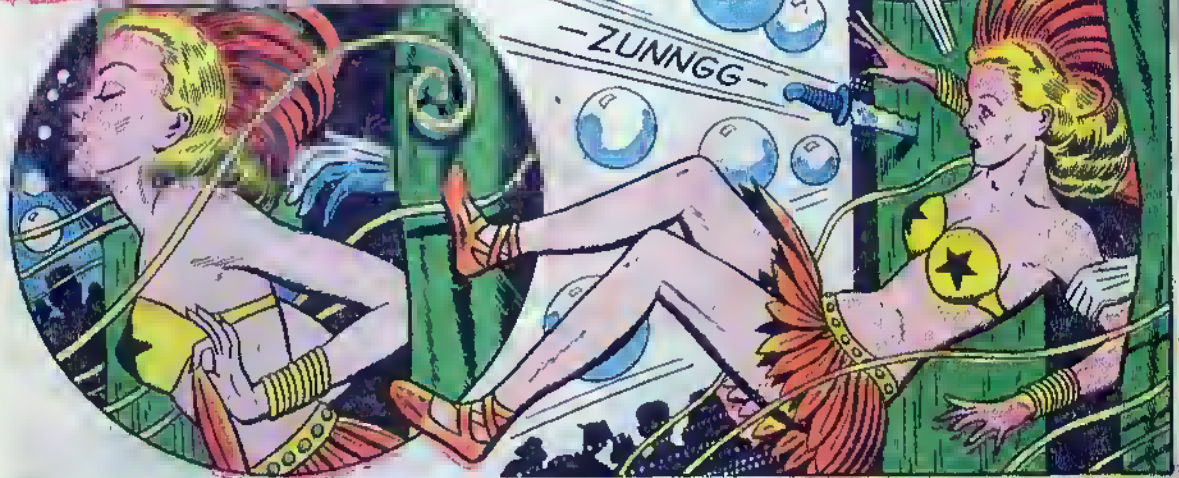


—FRED GUARDINEER

IN THE MARSADOR, A NEW HOT SPOT IN AN EON-OLD CITY...



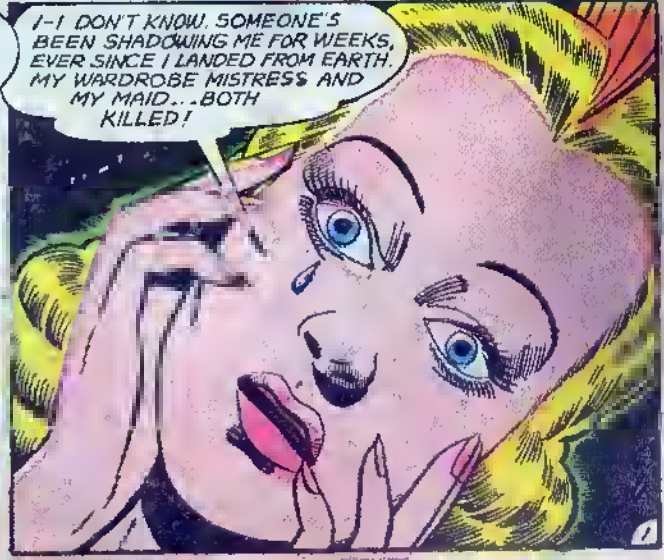
AN ENTHUSIASTIC AUDIENCE SHOWS ITS PLEASURE BY HURLING GAY STREAMERS... EVEN AS A HAND REACHES OUT GREEDILY...



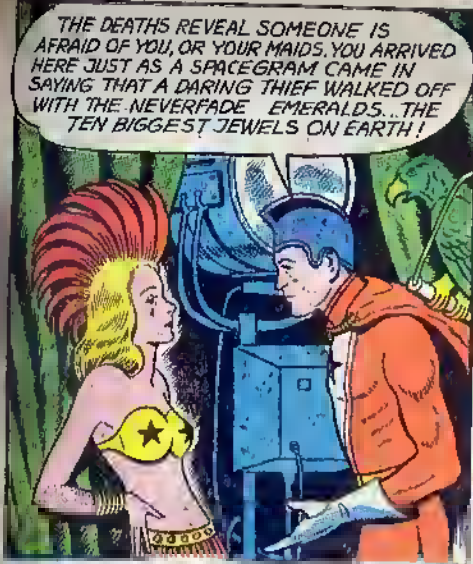
I-YOU...
A SPACE
PATROLMAN!

JET BLACK'S THE NAME THAT
WAS PRETTY CLOSE. WHOEVER
THREW THAT KNIFE WASN'T
INSPIRED BY YOUR DANCING.
WHO WAS IT?

I-I DON'T KNOW. SOMEONE'S
BEEN SHADOWING ME FOR WEEKS.
EVER SINCE I LANDED FROM EARTH.
MY WARDROBE MISTRESS AND
MY MAID... BOTH
KILLED!



MANHUNT

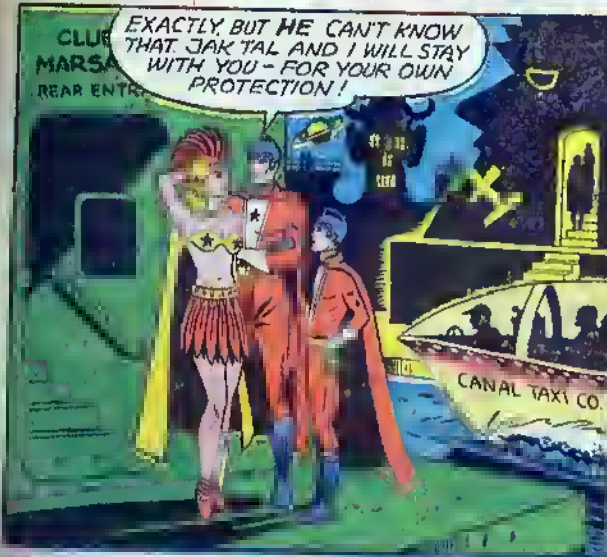


THE DEATHS REVEAL SOMEONE IS AFRAID OF YOU, OR YOUR MAIDS. YOU ARRIVED HERE JUST AS A SPACEGRAM CAME IN SAYING THAT A DARING THIEF WALKED OFF WITH THE NEVERFADE EMERALDS... THE TEN BIGGEST JEWELS ON EARTH!



IT COULD BE COINCIDENCE, BUT I THINK THE THIEF HAS PLANTED THE EMERALDS ON YOU. THE MAID AND WARDROBE GIRL FOUND OUT - AND DIED!

BUT I KNOW NOTHING OF IT!



EXACTLY, BUT HE CAN'T KNOW THAT JAK TAL AND I WILL STAY WITH YOU - FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION!

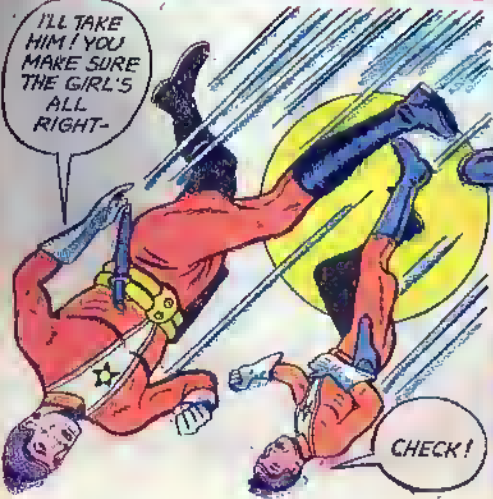


LATER THAT NIGHT, AS PHOBOS, ONE OF THE MOONS OF MARS, RISES HIGH INTO THE SKY...

LOOK THERE, JAK! SOMEONE'S CLIMBING FAN SAN'S BALCONY!

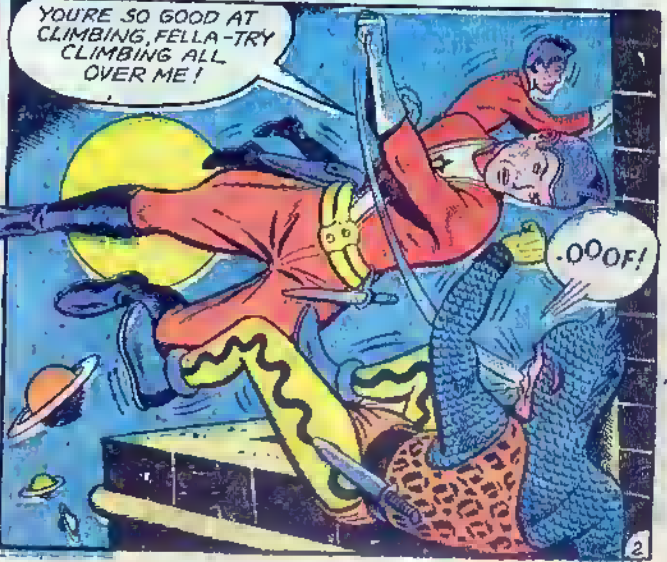
LET'S GO, JET!

SIDE BY SIDE THE TWO CRIME-CRUSHERS OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY LEAP FROM THE ROOF TOP, WITH ANTI-GRAVITY BELTS ON AT FULL!



I'LL TAKE HIM! YOU MAKE SURE THE GIRL'S ALL RIGHT-

CHECK!

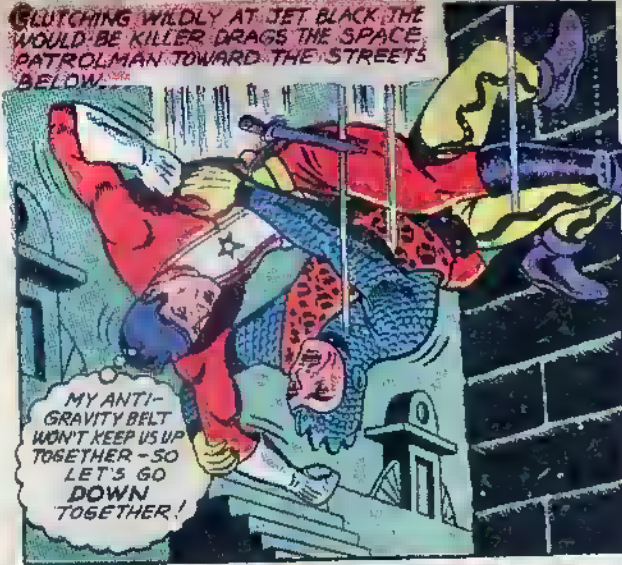


YOU'RE SO GOOD AT CLIMBING, FELLA-TRY CLIMBING ALL OVER ME!

..OOOF!

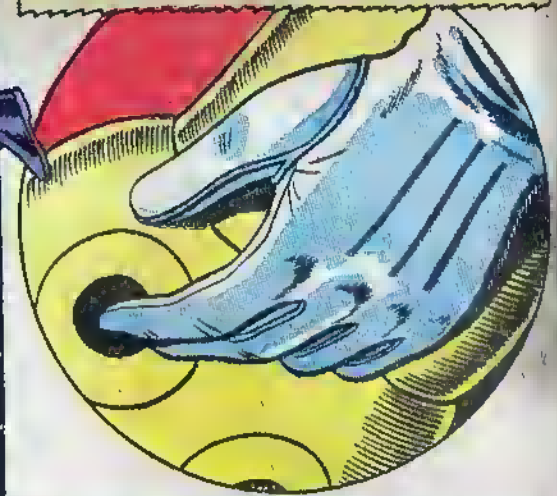
MANHUNT

CLUTCHING WILDLY AT JET BLACK, HE WOULD BE KILLER DRAGS THE SPACE PATROLMAN TOWARD THE STREETS BELOW.



MY ANTI-GRAVITY BELT WON'T KEEP US UP TOGETHER - SO LET'S GO DOWN TOGETHER!

DARINGLY, THE MANHUNTER OF THE FUTURE DEPRESSES A STUD IN HIS BELT...



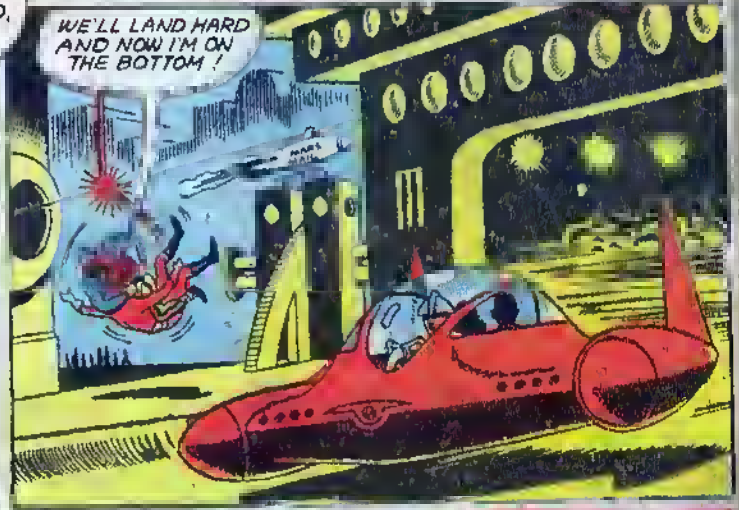
STOP... WE'LL BOTH BE KILLED! STOP!

NOT AFRAID TO GET BUMPED, ARE YOU?

A THIN, GUY-WIRE CATCHES AT THE SPACE PATROLMAN'S ANKLE, HURLING HIM SIDWAYS...



WE'LL LAND HARD AND NOW I'M ON THE BOTTOM!



THIS'S THE LUCKY BREAK I NEEDED TO GET AWAY!

SECONDS LATER, A FRANTIC JAK TAL BENDS ABOVE THE DAZED SPACE PATROLMAN...

SLOWLY, SLOWLY, JET BLACK OPENS HIS EYES AND SMILES A GRIM, WAN SMILE...

JET! JET! IF ANYTHING'S HAPPENED TO YOU, I'LL... ((SOB))... SPEAK TO ME, JET... ((SOB))

LOOKS LIKE I BUSTED A ROCKET ON THAT LANDING, JAK. OUR MAN GOT AWAY, BUT I GOT A GOOD LOOK AT HIM. MARK TREAK... BIG GAME HUNTER!



UAGH!

THUDD!



MANHUNT

FOURS LATER A ROCKET SHIP BLASTS A FLAME-STUDDED PATH UPWARD FROM MARSPOORT...

TREK'LL HEAD BEYOND THE ASTEROID BELT, FOR THE PLANETS WHERE HE GETS SO MANY OF HIS 'QUEERIES'—THE ANIMALS HE SENDS TO EARTH'S ZOOS!

HE KNOWS THOSE BIG GAME PLANETS PLENTY WELL. HAS A HUNTING LODGE ON KAPSA... THAT'S WHERE I'M HEADING! HE'LL CUT AND RUN THERE.

GET SET FOR TROUBLE JAK THERE'S PLENTY OF QUEER ANIMALS HERE!



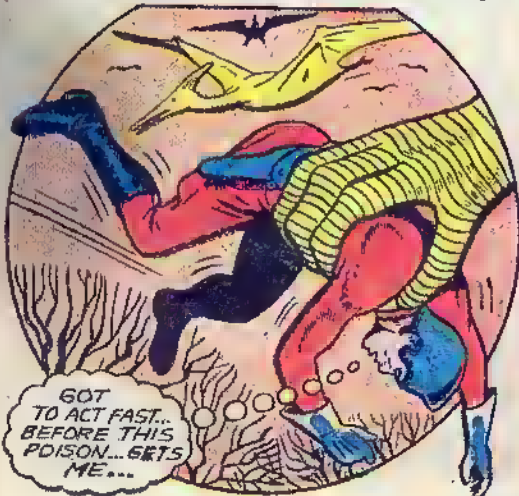
COAST'S CLEAR. LET'S GO!

A CLAWSYER! BLAST HIM! HIS TALONS ARE POISONED!

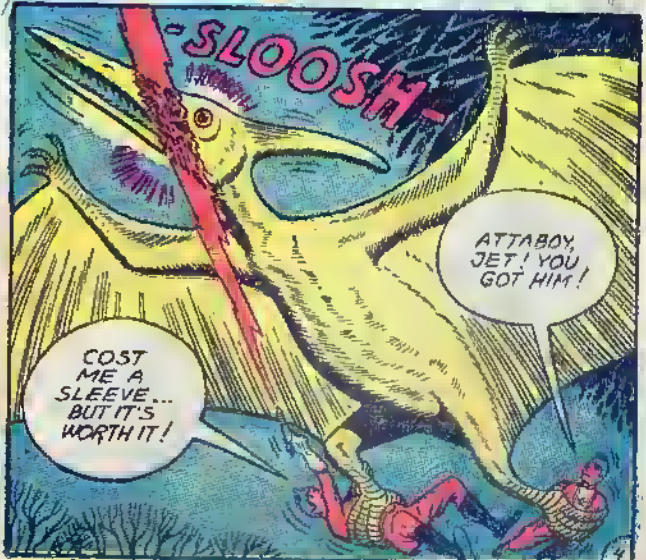


CAN'T GET... MY ARM... FREE...!

STRUGGLING MADLY, HIGH ABOVE THE GAUNT TREE-TOPS, JET BLACK WRITHES AS THE DEADLY POISON SEEPS THROUGH HIS BODY...



GOT TO ACT FAST... BEFORE THIS POISON... GETS ME...



SLOOSH-

ATTABOY, JET! YOU GOT HIM!

COST ME A SLEEVE... BUT IT'S WORTH IT!

MANHUNT



GRAVITY BELT...NO GOOD! BUSTED!

GRAB A TREE, JET GRAB A BRANCH...



SAFE ENOUGH NOW!

EXCEPT THAT WE'RE RIGHT OVER A MARSH SWAMP WE'D SINK IN THAT OOZY GROUND UP TO OUR NECKS! HMM...WHAT TO DO NOW?



WE CAN FOLLOW THE BRANCHES OF THIS BIG TREE! IT WILL LEAD US TO ANOTHER... AND ANOTHER THAT WAY WE'LL CROSS OVER THE SWAMP



A SWAMP PANTHER!

HE'S GOT ME, JET... SAVE YOURSELF!



THE DARING SPACEMAN OF THE 21ST CENTURY HURLS HIMSELF IN A MAD LEAP ACROSS SPACE.

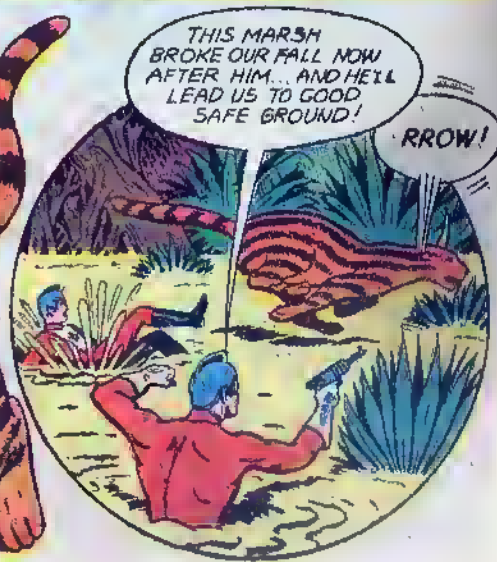
THE SWAMP PANTHER KNOWS THE SOLID PIECES OF GROUND. BUT IF I KILL HIM, HE CAN'T LEAD US OUT OF THE SWAMP!

A TENSE HAND A CAREFUL AIM, AND JET BLACK FIRES!



WOUNDED HIM!

-RROWW!



THIS MARSH BROKE OUR FALL NOW AFTER HIM... AND HE'LL LEAD US TO GOOD SAFE GROUND!

RROW!

MANHUNT

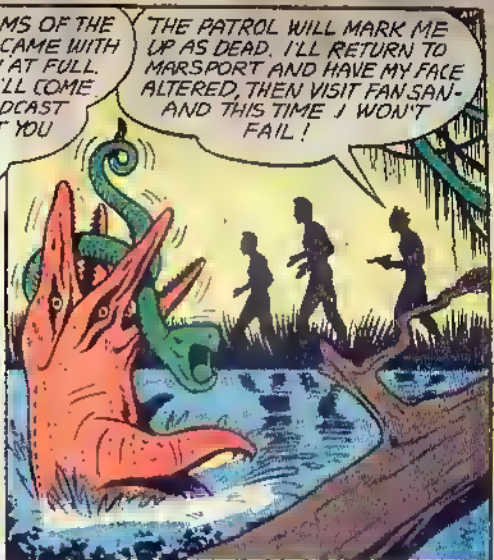


— AND RIGHT INTO MY HANDS, JET BLACK AND JAK TAL! GLAD TO SEE YOU AT THE BUSINESS END OF MY BLASTER!

MARK TREAK!



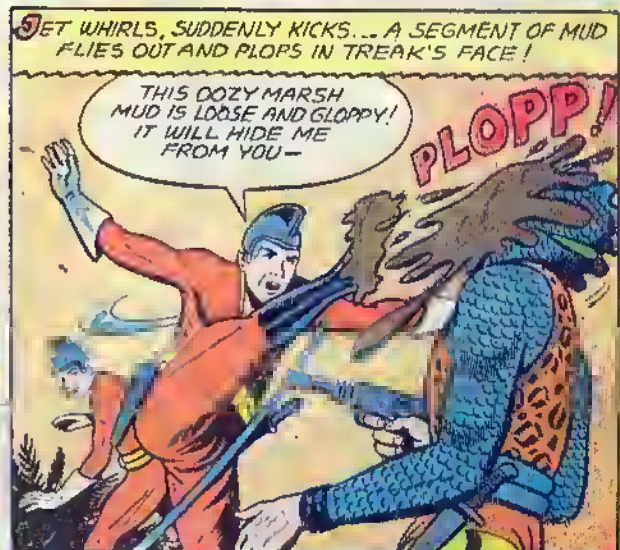
I HEARD THE SCREAMS OF THE MARSH PANTHER, AND CAME WITH MY GRAVITY BELT ON AT FULL. GLAD I DID NOW, YOU'LL COME BACK WITH ME... BROADCAST OVER SPACEVOX THAT YOU KILLED ME IN THE LINE OF DUTY!



THE PATROL WILL MARK ME UP AS DEAD. I'LL RETURN TO MARS PORT AND HAVE MY FACE ALTERED, THEN VISIT FAN SAN— AND THIS TIME I WON'T FAIL!



I STOLE THE NEVERFADE EMERALDS FROM EARTH. I PUT THEM IN FAN SAN'S DANCING COSTUME INSTEAD OF THE GREEN GLASS THAT ORNAMENTS IT. HER MAID AND WARDROBE MISTRESS FOUND OUT... AND DIED! ALL I HAVE TO DO IS GET THAT COSTUME, AND I CAN RETIRE TO LIVE LIKE A VENUSIAN KING!



JET WHIRLS, SUDDENLY KICKS... A SEGMENT OF MUD FLIES OUT AND PLOPS IN TREAK'S FACE!

THIS DOZY MARSH MUD IS LOOSE AND GLOPPY! IT WILL HIDE ME FROM YOU—

PLOPP!



— LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO PUT THE "CRUSHER" ON YOU!

THUD!

YIII!



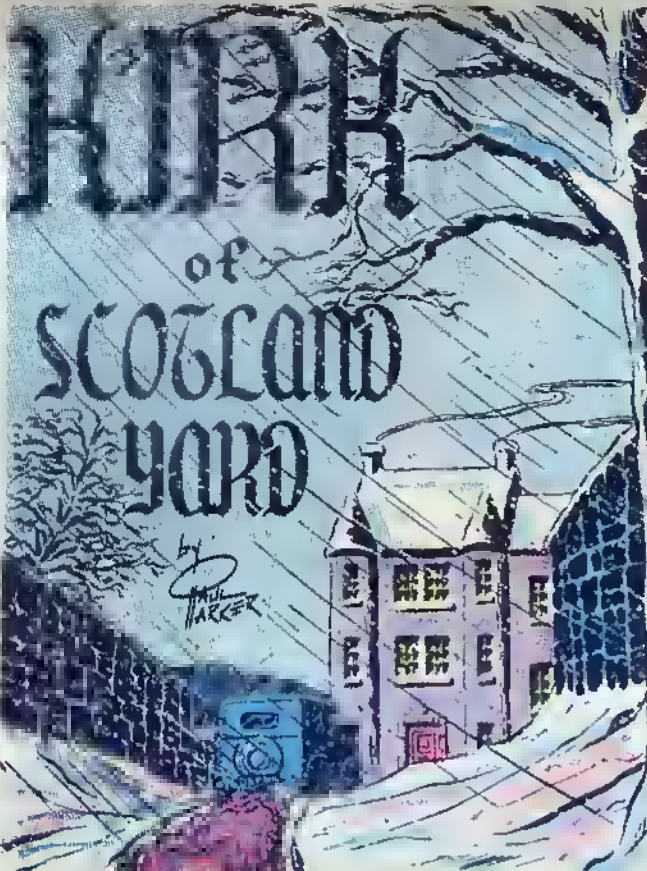
WE'LL USE HIS GRAVITY BELT TO GET US SAFELY TO OUR SPACER AFTER THAT. IT'S MARS PORT AND JAIL FOR HIM. IT ENDED HAPPILY, JAK TAL! LIKE THE ANIMALS HE'S CAPTURED, TREAK'LL GO BEHIND BARS HIMSELF!

MAYBE SO, BUT JUST THE SAME—



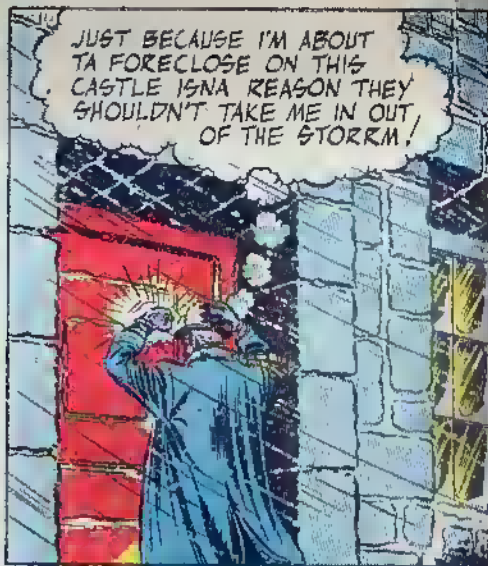
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO LOOK AT ANOTHER ANIMAL CRACKER! ANIMALS? GRRYAA..

—THE END—



THE MENKIES AND THE MACCLAYMORES WERE BITTER ENEMIES AMONG THE SCOTTISH CLANS...ON A LATE WINTER AFTERNOON, WHEN SNOW SWEEP THE BROAD HIGHLAND COUNTRY, SIR KENNETH MENKIE JOURNEYED TO MACCLAYMORE CASTLE, TO BEGIN THE STRANGE TALE OF...

"The FAERY and the FIREPLACE"

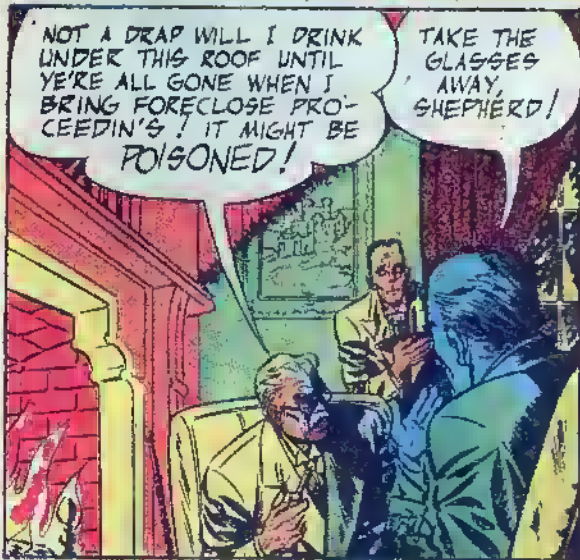


JUST BECAUSE I'M ABOUT TA FORECLOSE ON THIS CASTLE ISNA REASON THEY SHOULDN'T TAKE ME IN OUT OF THE STORM!



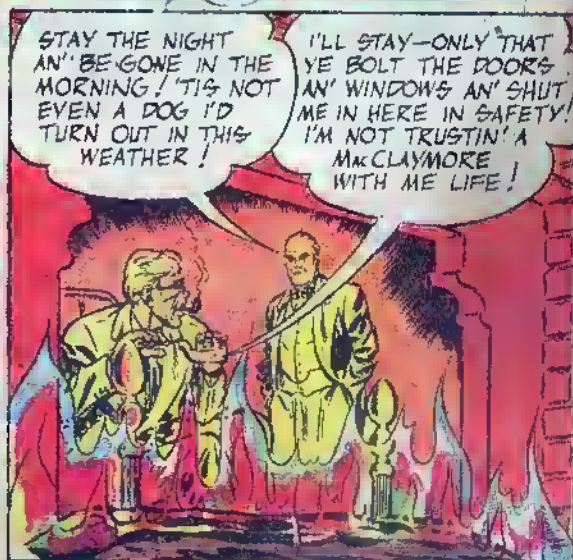
HA! 'TIS KENNETH MENKIE, ME OLD ENEMY! COME IN, MAN!

I WOULDNA STEP O'ER YER DOORSILL BUT THA STORM IS GITTIN' SO BAD! I'M LIABLE TA FRREEZE OUTSIDE!



NOT A DRAP WILL I DRINK UNDER THIS ROOF UNTIL YE'RE ALL GONE WHEN I BRING FORECLOSE PROCEEDIN'S! IT MIGHT BE POISONED!

TAKE THE GLASSES AWAY, SHEPHERD!



STAY THE NIGHT AN' BE GONE IN THE MORNING! 'TIS NOT EVEN A DOG I'D TURN OUT IN THIS WEATHER!

I'LL STAY—ONLY THAT YE BOLT THE DOORS AN' WINDOWS AN' SHUT ME IN HERE IN SAFETY! I'M NOT TRUSTIN' A MACCLAYMORE WITH ME LIFE!

MANHUNT

THE NEXT MORNING...



I SAW THE DOOR HAD BEEN BOLTED MESELF WHEN YE SUMMONED ME FROM TOWN!... I BROKE DOWN THE DOOR AND SAW HIM DEAD! BUT THIS FAERY, NOW—

WE CALL HIM 'DUGAL! HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO COULD HAVE GOTTEN IN TO KILL HIM!



I MUST CALL IN SCOTLAND YARD, SIR IAN... THEY'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO!

THERE, NOW, PEG... THINGS'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

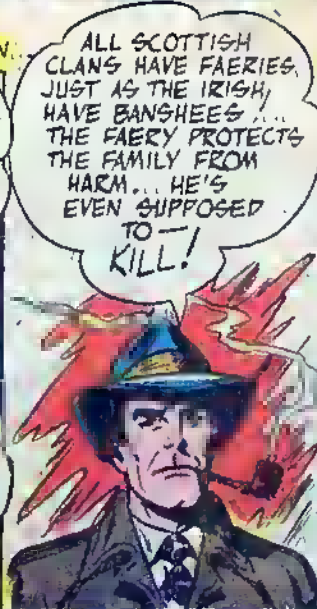
ON HOUR LATER, AT WATERLOO STATION, LONDON...



RONNIE, I HAVE A FEELING... I HAVE TO COME ALONG— JUST TO SEE THIS SILLY FAERY!

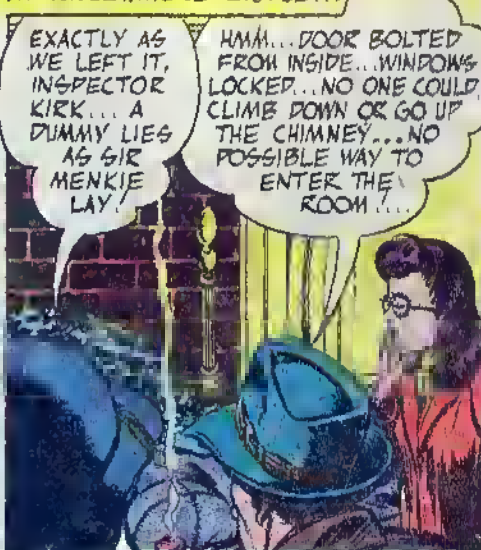
SILLY? I'M NOT SO SURE, ANNE...

THIS WAY, SIR!



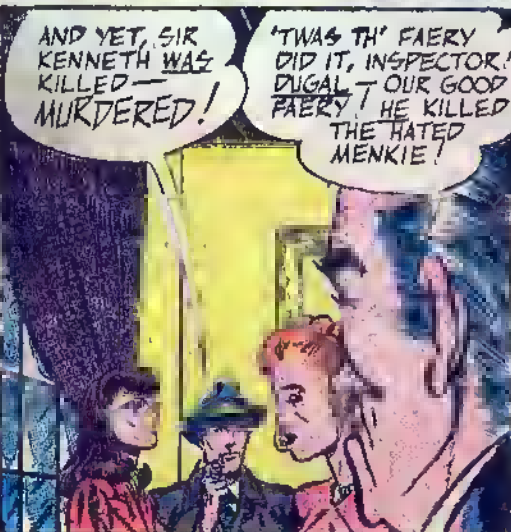
ALL SCOTTISH CLANS HAVE FAERIES, JUST AS THE IRISH HAVE BANSHEES... THE FAERY PROTECTS THE FAMILY FROM HARM... HE'S EVEN SUPPOSED TO— KILL!

3 HOURS LATER, BEYOND THE BORDER, AT MACCLAYMORE CASTLE...



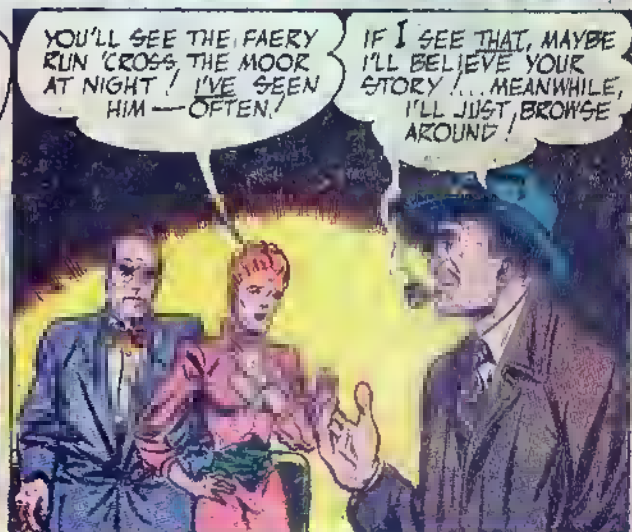
EXACTLY AS WE LEFT IT, INSPECTOR KIRK... A DUMMY LIES AS SIR MENKIE LAY!

HMM... DOOR BOLTED FROM INSIDE... WINDOWS LOCKED... NO ONE COULD CLIMB DOWN OR GO UP THE CHIMNEY... NO POSSIBLE WAY TO ENTER THE ROOM!



AND YET, SIR KENNETH WAS KILLED— MURDERED!

'TWAS TH' FAERY DID IT, INSPECTOR! DUGAL 'OUR GOOD FAERY' HE KILLED THE HATED MENKIE!



YOU'LL SEE THE FAERY RUN 'CROSS THE MOOR AT NIGHT! I'VE SEEN HIM— OFTEN!

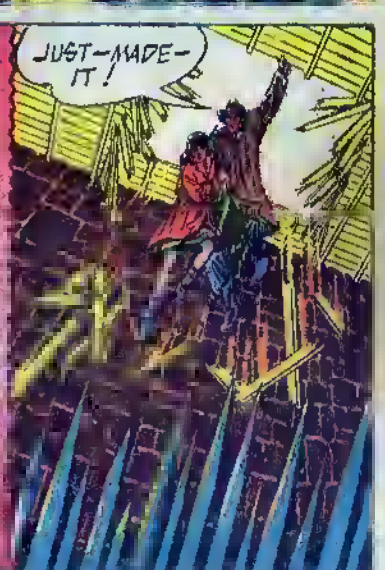
IF I SEE THAT, MAYBE I'LL BELIEVE YOUR STORY!... MEANWHILE, I'LL JUST BROWSE AROUND!

MANHUNT

THAT NIGHT, UNDER THE YELLOW SCOTTISH MOON...



TRAINED TO QUICK REFLEXES BY THE YARD, INSPECTOR RONALD KIRK THRUSTS OUT A HAND, CLASPS DOWN HARD ON A SOLID SECTION OF FLOORING.

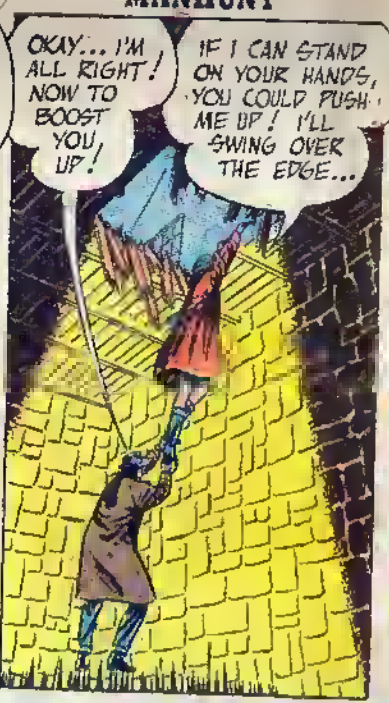


MANHUNT



YOU CAN'T HANG ON... AND WHEN WE FALL... THOSE STAKES WILL SPEAR US!

GOT TO TAKE A CHANCE... IF YOU CAN CLING TO THE BOARDS, I'LL LOWER MYSELF!



OKAY... I'M ALL RIGHT! NOW TO BOOST YOU, UP!

IF I CAN STAND ON YOUR HANDS, YOU COULD PUSH ME UP! I'LL SWING OVER THE EDGE...

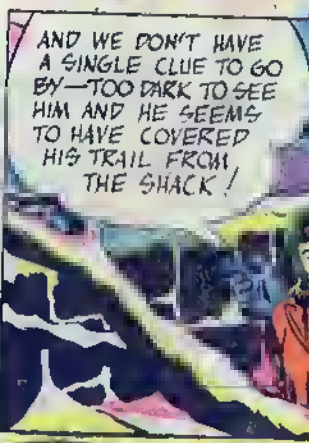


I'LL LOOP AN END OF HIS ROPE AROUND A BEAM!... THEN YOU CAN PULL YOURSELF UP!

RIGHTO!



CLEVER OF THE KILLER, ANNE... HE—OR SHE— WOULD BLAME OUR DEATHS ON THE FAMILY FAERY! THEY'D SAY THE FAERY APPEARED TO US... TRICKED US TO THE SHACK... DISAPPEARED, AS WE FELL TO OUR DEATHS!



AND WE DON'T HAVE A SINGLE CLUE TO GO BY—TOO DARK TO SEE HIM AND HE SEEMS TO HAVE COVERED HIS TRAIL FROM THE SHACK!



IT APPEARS HE'S JUST DISSOLVED INTO THE SNOW, AS A CIGARETTE BURNS TO ASHES...

ASHES! OF COURSE! THEY'RE THE CLUE TO HISTORY!

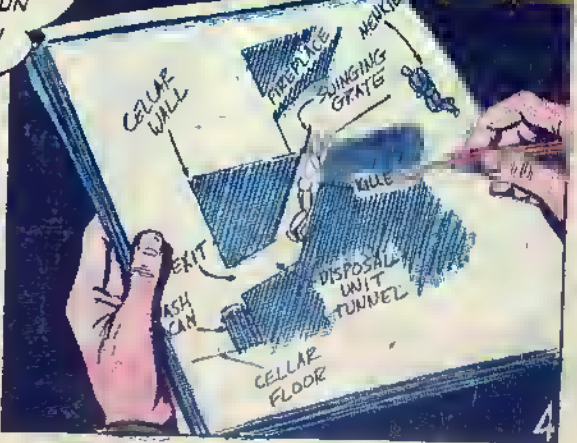
A FEW MINUTES LATER, IN THE MURDER ROOM...



BUT I DON'T SEE ANYTHING WRONG...

NO, BUT YOU SEE THIS ASHES-DISPOSAL UNIT? THE ASHES ARE SWEEPED DOWN THERE... TO THE CELLAR! A PERSON COULD LIE IN THAT UNIT—THRUST A GUN THROUGH THE SWINGING GRATE!

KIRK SKETCHES RAPIDLY, ILLUSTRATING THE WAY THE KILLER, SHOT INTO A LOCKED AND BOLTED ROOM—KILLING KENNETH MENKIE!



MANHUNT

IN THE CELLAR...

I CAN'T FIT IN THERE, BUT YOU CAN!

THEREFORE, THE KILLER COULD BE A GIRL!

WATCH OUT!

BAM

WE FORCED THE KILLER OUT INTO THE OPEN, ANYHOW!

GOT YOU! - HA! EVEN WITH A GUN IN YOUR HAND YOU RUN LIKE A BLOODY HARE!

BAM

WE WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO LEAVE WITHOUT FIRST GETTING A GOOD LOOK AT YOU! ... EH?

BUT, BEFORE KIRK COULD IDENTIFY THE PRICKY...

ASHES! BLINDED ME!

THAT'LL HOLD YE!

HE GOT AWAY, KIRK! I TRIED TO STOP HIM... BUT I DIDN'T EVEN GET A LOOK AT HIS FACE!

NITHER DID I, BUT... I KNOW WHO HE IS!

MANHUNT

THE KILLER HAD TO BE SMALL OF BUILD TO FIT INTO THE ASH-DISPOSAL UNIT... HE HAD TO KNOW THE CASTLE TO BE AWARE THERE WAS SUCH A THING... HE HAD TO BE STRONG TO PUT UP A FIGHT WITH ME, AND TO RUN FAST ACROSS THE MOOR AS HE DID WHEN HE LURED US TO THE SHACK—

SIR IAN WAS TOO LARGE AND CLUMSY... PEG, HIS DAUGHTER, DOESN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH! THAT LEAVES THE FAMILY SERVANT— SHEPHERD!

LOOK! HE'S GETTING AWAY!

ACROSS THE SNOW-COVERED MOOR AND INTO THE CRAGS OF BONNIE DELL GO THE KILLER AND HIS PURSUER...

YOU'LL NEVER ESCAPE THE LAW... NEVER!

ON TOP OF A NARROW, TABLE-TOP ROCK, KIRK STRUGGLES DESPERATELY WITH THE WIRY KILLER...

THE MANIACAL FURY OF SHEPHERD GIVES HIM ADDED STRENGTH... A WILDLY SWINGING FIST SENDS INSPECTOR KIRK REELING—

AYE! I KILT THE MENKIE, WHO WAS FOR FORECLOSIN' ON TH' OLD CASTLE! I KILT HIM— JUST AS I'LL KILL YOU!

SAVE YOUR... BREATH!

IF I SLIP... I'LL FALL A THOUSAND FEET... TO THE ROCKS BELOW...!

I'LL KICK YE LOOSE FROM THE ROCK, AN' —UHH!

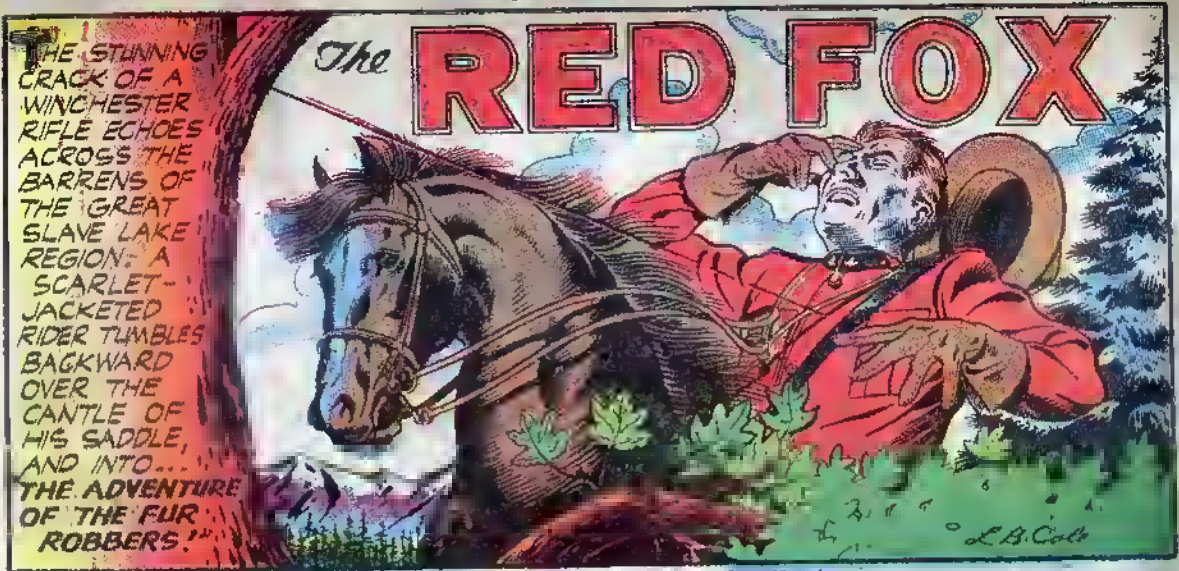
LOOK OUT, FOOL!... YOUR ON THE EDGE! LOOK—

POOR DEVIL! HE'S FALLING TO A HORRIBLE DEATH... DOWN ON THOSE JAGGED ROCKS!

RAH! LE EEE!

SHEPHERD HOPED TO ESCAPE CAPTURE BY BLAMING THE FAERY!

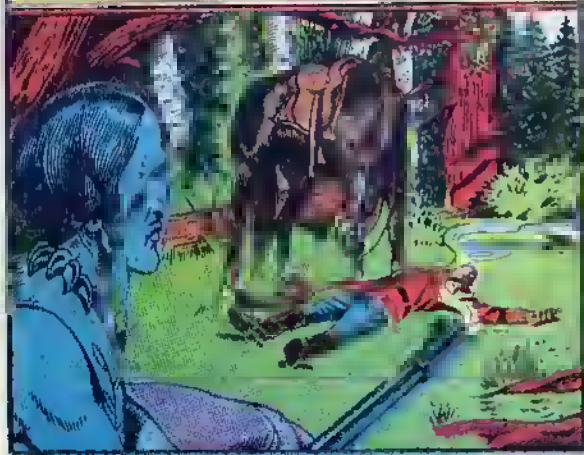
AND THE FAERY DESERTED HIM WHEN HE NEEDED HIM MOST— ON TOP OF THE BONNIE DELL CLIFF!



THE STUNNING CRACK OF A WINCHESTER RIFLE ECHOES ACROSS THE BARRENS OF THE GREAT SLAVE LAKE REGION. A SCARLET-JACKETED RIDER TUMBLES BACKWARD OVER THE CANTLE OF HIS SADDLE, AND INTO... THE ADVENTURE OF THE FUR ROBBERS!

The RED FOX

THE ECHOES STILL LASH FROM WOODS TO WATER, BUT THE RED-COATED FORM OF SERGEANT JEFFREY FOX NEVER STIRS---



PESTE! I CANNOT SEE WHETHER THERE IS A WOUND BECAUSE OF THAT CURSED RED COAT HE WEARS. I'LL HAVE TO GO CLOSER---

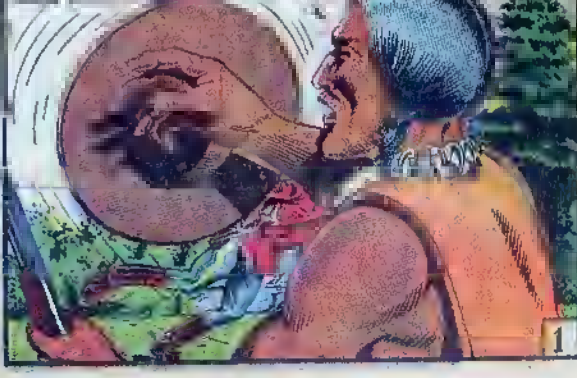


HE LOOKS DEAD ENOUGH, BUT I MUST MAKE SURE. THE PEACE RIVER 'BREEDS ARE COUNTING....PESTE! IT'S THE RED FOX!!



WITH A MUFFLED CURSE, THE HALF-BREED RAISES HIS RIFLE JUST AS THE RED FOX WHIRLS ASIDE AND HIS RIGHT HAND HURLS HIS STIFF-BRIMMED HAT FLYING---

'E TRICKED ME! PESTE! I CAN'T SEE TO SHOOT ACCURATELY...!



MANHUNT

I CAN SEE TO SHOOT... AND WILL !!

UGGGH!

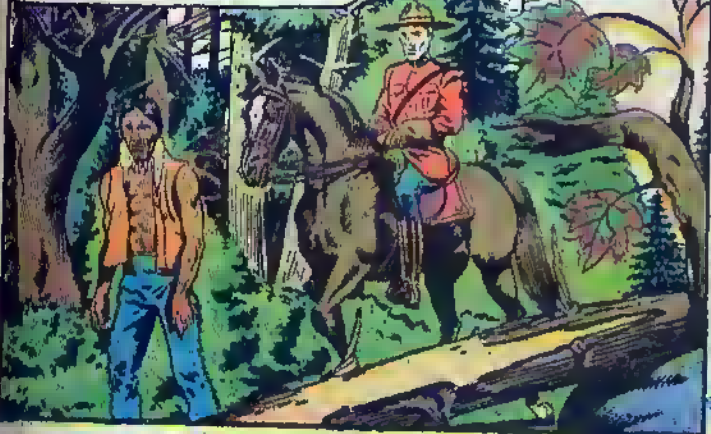
CRACK

RAOUL METIS! FUR-STEALER, SQUAW-BEATER AND GENERAL ALL-AROUND TROUBLE-MAKER! WHY AREN'T YOU ON PEACE RIVER WHERE YOU BELONG?

I NO TALK!

THEN I'LL TELL YOU! REPORTS CAME IN TO THE FORT THAT THE BLACKFOOT INDIANS UP HERE WERE GETTING RESTLESS. CLAIMED THEIR FURS WERE BEING STOLEN. I WAS ON MY WAY UP TO TALK TO CORNSTALK, THEIR CHIEF!

YOU AND YOUR BREEDS STOLE THE FURS. YOU WANTED THE INDIANS TO REBEL SO THE MOUNTIES WOULD PUNISH THEM. YOU FIGURED YOU'D MOVE IN ON THEIR FUR COUNTRY THEN... UNDER OUR PROTECTION!



A HEAD OF THE SCARLET STALKER, A BLACK-EYED INDIAN CROUCHES, TWIG AND ROPE IN HAND...

MOUNTIE POLICEMAN COME WITH PRISONER. NO WANT MOUNTIE FIND CORNSTALK AND BRAVES READY FOR WARPATH. FIX RABBIT-TRAP FOR HIM...



HIM NOT SEE NOOSE UNTIL TOO LATE. SAPLING RELEASED, GO BACK UPRIGHT. PULL OF SAPLING BREAK MOUNTIE'S NECK!

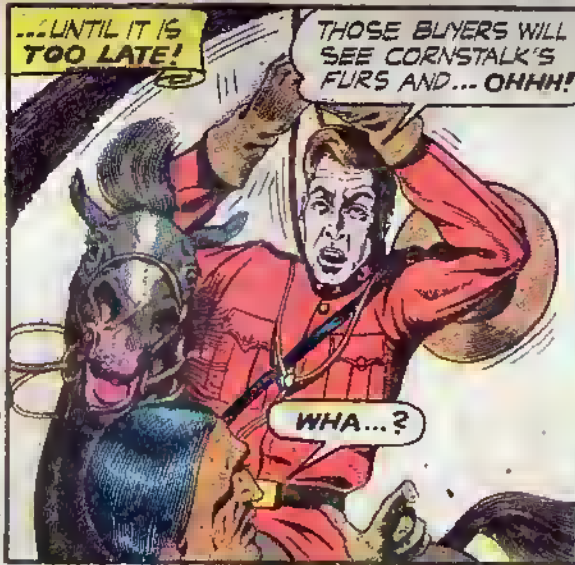


YES ON HIS PRISONER, THE RED FOX DOES NOT SEE THE CUNNINGLY CONCEALED LOOP...

IF THERE WERE SOME WAY OF GETTING CORNSTALK TO COME TO FORT MACLEOD, I'D PUT A CRIMP IN YOUR PLAN! FUR-BUYERS FROM ENGLAND ARE DUE THERE ANY DAY...



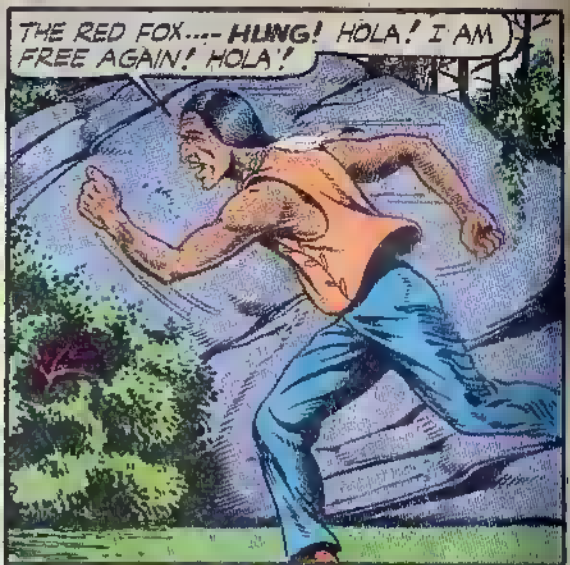
MANHUNT



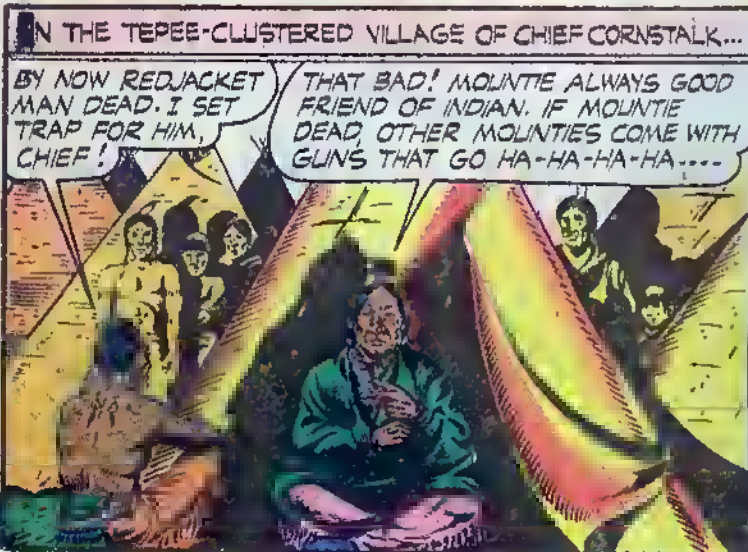
...UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE!

THOSE BUYERS WILL SEE CORNSTALK'S FURS AND... OHHH!

WHA...?



THE RED FOX... HUNG! HOLA! I AM FREE AGAIN! HOLA!



IN THE TEPEE-CLUSTERED VILLAGE OF CHIEF CORNSTALK...

BY NOW REDJACKET MAN DEAD. I SET TRAP FOR HIM, CHIEF!

THAT BAD! MOUNTIE ALWAYS GOOD FRIEND OF INDIAN. IF MOUNTIE DEAD, OTHER MOUNTIES COME WITH GUNS THAT GO HA-HA-HA-HA----



BUT IF WE GO ON WARPATH, MOUNTIES COME ANYHOW!

UGH! THEY WILL SEE JUSTICE DONE TO CORNSTALK'S TRIBE! GO BRING ME BODY OF MOUNTIE. I TAKE HIM TO FORT, TELL HIM INSPECTOR WE SORRY!



NO NEED FOR THAT, CHIEF!

GHOST OF MOUNTIE COME TO HAUNT BLACKFEET!

IT IS RED FOX! LE REYNARD ROUGE!



I'M NO GHOST! WHEN THE LOOP TIGHTENED AROUND MY THROAT, I SLIPPED MY FEET FREE OF MY STIRRUPS ALMOST INSTINCTIVELY--

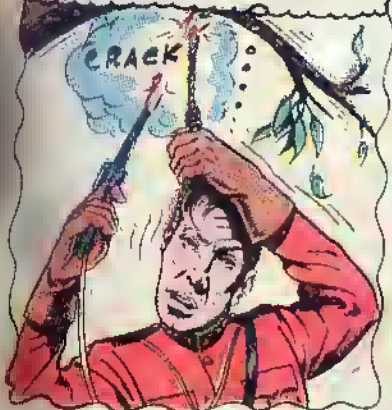


THE NOOSE DREW ME UP INTO THE AIR, BUT I GOT MY FEET ON MY MOUNT'S BACK AND KICKED UPWARD! THIS LOOSENED THE PRESSURE ON MY THROAT--

MANHUNT

"GAVE ME A CHANCE TO PUT A LEFT HAND ON THE ROPE AND A RIGHT HAND ON MY GUN..."

A WELL-PLACED BULLET WILL SHEAR THE ROPE IN HALF...



THE BULLET DID ITS WORK. MY THROAT'S STILL SORE AND MY PRISONER GOT AWAY... BUT IF YOU'LL COME TO THE FORT WITH YOUR BEST FURS, I'LL FORGET WHAT HAPPENED!



MY BRAVES THINK FUR DISPLAY IS FOR SQUAWMEN!

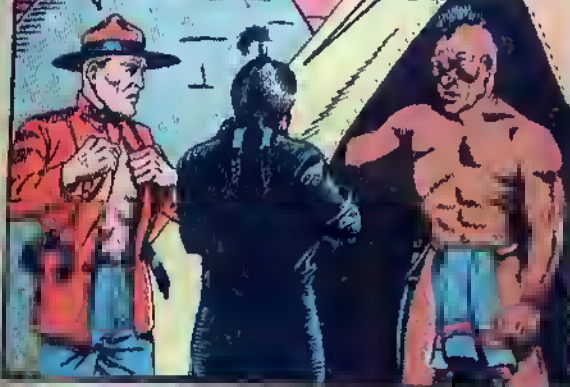
STRONG BLACKFOOT MEN NOT BRING 'FURS. THAT WHAT YOU CALL "SISSY" STUFF! WE STAY HERE!

SISSY STUFF, HUH? TELL YOU WHAT... YOU BRING ON YOUR BEST FIGHTER AND I'LL MEET HIM HAND TO HAND!



IF I WIN, YOU COME WITH FURS. IF I LOSE, I'LL GO TO OTTOWA AND PLEA YOUR CASE WITH THE GOVERNOR!

THAT GOOD BET. HEAVY-HAND! YOU COME FIGHT MOUNTIE!

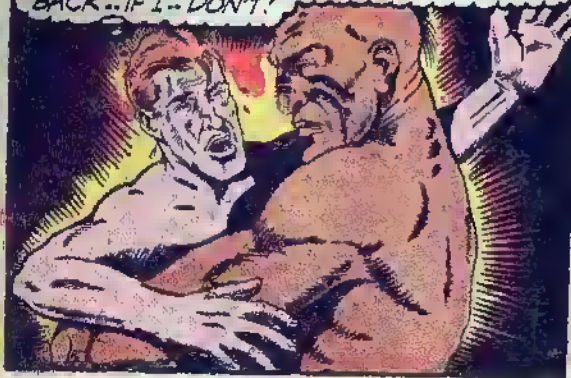


DWARFED BY THE GIGANTIC BLACKFOOT WRESTLER, THE RED FOX FACES OFF IN THE ROPE CIRCLE, KNOWING HE MUST WIN OR RESIGN FROM THE FORCE!

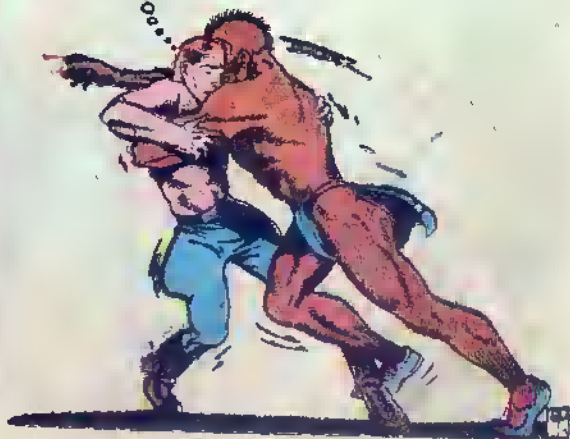


BAYHAND LEAPS! HIS GREAT ARMS GO OUT AND CLOSE ON THE WRITHING MOUNTIE! TOO LATE, THE RED FOX IS TRAPPED IN ARMS AS STRONG AS THOSE OF A KODIAK BEAR!

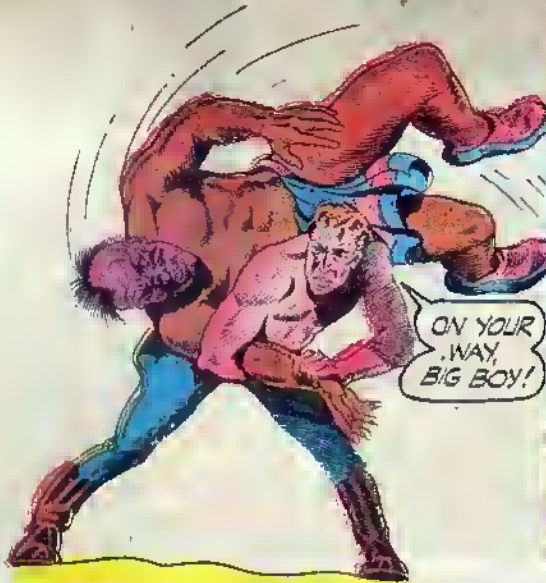
GOT TO... WORK FREE. HE'LL BREAK MY BACK... IF I - DON'T!



GOOD THING I REMEMBERED THE WRESTLING TRICKS THEY TAUGHT ME AT REGINA....

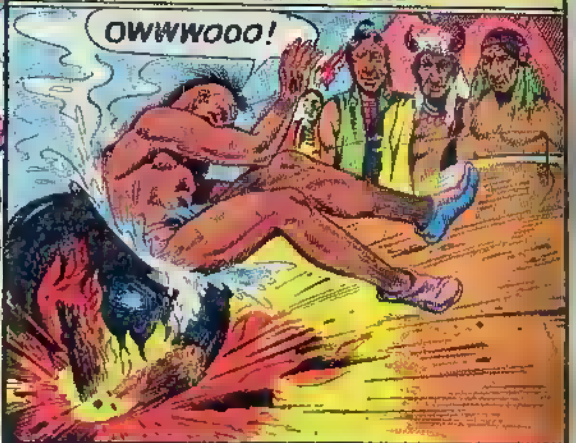


MANHUNT

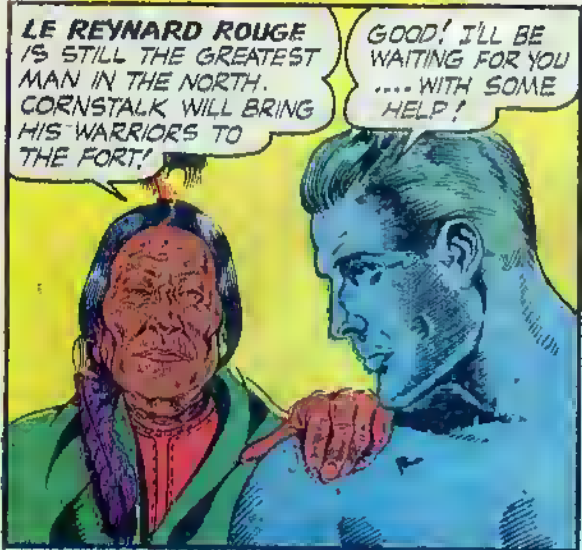


ON YOUR WAY, BIG BOY!

HEAVYHAND THUMPS DOWN INTO A COOKING POT. HIS HOWLS OF PAIN AS THE BOILING WATER SEARS HIM BRING SMILES TO THE FACES OF HIS TRIBESMEN....



OWWWOOO!



LE REYNARD ROUGE IS STILL THE GREATEST MAN IN THE NORTH. CORNSTALK WILL BRING HIS WARRIORS TO THE FORT!

GOOD! I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU ... WITH SOME HELP!



A WEEK LATER, IN A LOG CABIN AT FORT SIMPSON....

SO YOU LIKE MY SWEATTAIRE, JEFF? HEIN?

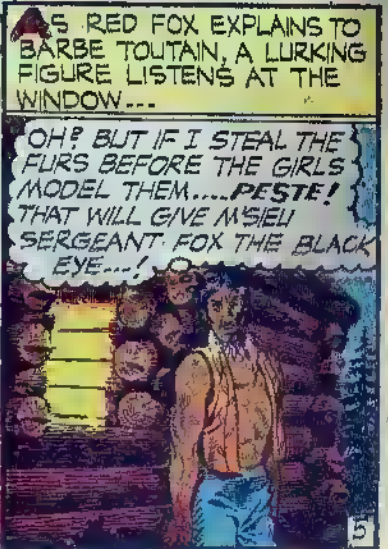
I SURE DO. AND TALKING ABOUT SWEATERS, I WANT YOU TO GET ME THE TEN PRETTIEST GIRLS AROUND THE FORT.



TEN GIRLS! SACRE BLEU! YOU DO NOT LOVE YOUR BARBE, HEIN? TEN GIRLS! EES EET THAT YOU WANT TO START ZEE AREM?

NO, NO! YOU HAVE IT ALL WRONG! CORNSTALK'S BRINGING HIS TRIBE AND THEIR BEST FURS TO THE FORT. I WANT THE GIRLS TO MODEL THEM... SO THE BUYERS WILL BE IMPRESSED!

THE BUYERS WILL GIVE THE INDIANS A CONTRACT! RAOUL METIS WILL NOT DARE INVADE THE CHIEF'S FUR GROUNDS THEN. BIG BUSINESS WOULD KICK TO THE GOVERNMENT!



AS RED FOX EXPLAINS TO BARBE TOUTAIN, A LURKING FIGURE LISTENS AT THE WINDOW...

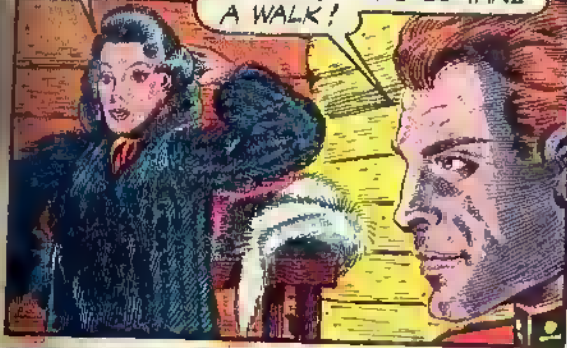
OH? BUT IF I STEAL THE FURS BEFORE THE GIRLS MODEL THEM....PESTE! THAT WILL GIVE M'SIEL SERGEANT FOX THE BLACK EYE...!

MANHUNT

WEEKS LATER, AFTER THE BLACKFOOT TRIBE ENTERS THE FORT AND STACKS ITS RARE FURS, BARBE MODELS A COAT FOR THE RED FOX...

YOU LIKE BARBE IN ZE SEELVER FOXES, HEIN?

A COMBINATION OF BARBE AND BARBE'S PERFUME AND THOSE FURS IS PLENTY STRONG! LET'S GO TAKE A WALK!



LATER...

IN HERE! PESTE! THESE FURS ARE WORTH A FORTUNE. ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS PUT ON THE FUR COATS ...PRETEND TO BE THE MODELS ... AND WALK OFF!

ESPECIALLY IF WE WAIT UNTIL AFTER DARK ...THE FURS WILL COVER US COMPLETELY....!



THAT NIGHT, AS SERGEANT JEFFREY FOX SEES THE MODELS LEAVE THE POST, HIS EYES SEEK OUT BARBE TOUTAIN....

THERE'S BARBE NOW, IN THE SILVER FOX WRAP!



SUDDENLY....

YOU AREN'T BARBE! ALL YOU OTHERS....HANDS SKYWARD OR I'LL SHOOT!



METIS! SO YOU THOUGHT YOU'D TRY ONE LAST TRICK, EH? THIS ONE BACKFIRED ON YOU. HE PROBABLY TIED UP THE GIRL MODELS!



MY DARLEENG! HOWEVER DID YOU KNOW EET WAS NOT ME EEN THE FURS? METIS WAS COMPLETELY COVAIRED FROM HEAD TO FOOT!

YOUR PERFUME BARBE! YOU ALWAYS USE PERFUME ... AND METIS - WELL, HE DOESN'T!



CORNSTALK GET CONTRACT FOR FURS. BLACKFEET SAFE FROM ROBBERS NOW, THANKS TO RED FOX. CAN'T GIVE MOUNTIE PRESENT, BUT MAYBE BARBE TOUTAIN LIKE SILVER FOX COAT?

OOOHH! AS ZE AMERICAN SAY....AND 'OW!



FALLON

OF THE

F.B.I.

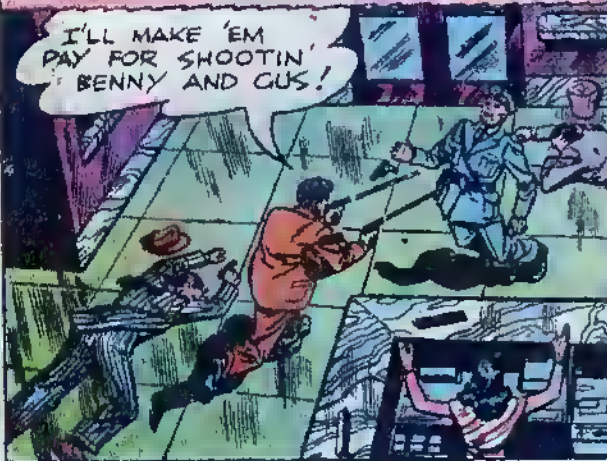


HIS FACE FRAMED IN THE TELESCOPIC SIGHTS OF A MAN-KILLING DESPERADO'S RIFLE, JIM FALLON PUSHES ON RELENTLESSLY THROUGH THE SWAMP COUNTRY OF THE SOUTHLAND. EVERY STEP HE TAKES BRINGS HIM DEEPER INTO THE MYSTERIOUS BAYOUS, AND TO A TRAGIC RENDEZVOUS WITH.....

"THE GIRL AND THE GORILLA"

THIS WAS THE GORILLA -- MAD MIKE MAKLE -- AS HE SHOT HIS WAY OUT OF THE SCENIC NATIONAL BANK.

I'LL MAKE 'EM PAY FOR SHOOTIN' BENNY AND GUS!



WITH TIRES SCREECHING, HE MADE HIS GETAWAY TO THE SOUTH!

I GOT FIFTY GRAND ON ME -- THREE AUTOMATICS AND MY RIFLE WITH THE TELESCOPIC SIGHTS. LET 'EM TRY AND CATCH ME!



THE F.B.I., WITH JIM FALLON AT THE WHEEL, TOOK UP THE CHALLENGE..

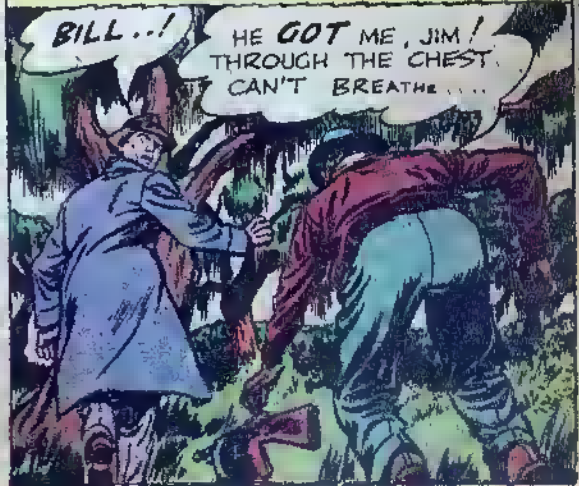
HE'S HEADING INTO THE BAYOUS. WE CAN'T GO IN THERE, EXCEPT ON FOOT. SO LET'S START WALKING!



AS THE G-MEN ENTER THE BAYOUS, A RIFLE CRACKED ---

BILL..!

HE GOT ME, JIM! THROUGH THE CHEST. I CAN'T BREATHE.....



MANHUNT

LIKE STONES TOSSED INTO A LAKE, THE EFFECTS OF THE MURDEROUS BULLET RIPPLED OUT ACROSS THE BAYOUS . . .

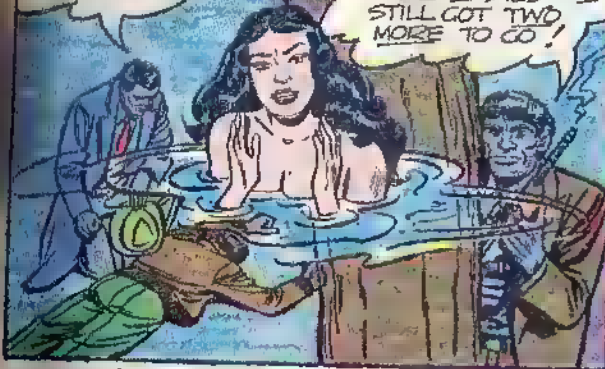
... TO REACH THE EARS OF PRETTY LETTY, ORPHAN OF THE BAYOUS .. WILD AND UNTAMED, IN THE COOL SWAMP WATERS.

I'LL GET HIM BILL. HE'LL PAY FOR THIS. I SWEAR...

OHhh?

A FORTUNE TELLER TOLD ME I'D KILL TEN PEOPLE BEFORE I DIED! I STILL GOT TWO MORE TO GO!

SOMEONE SHOOTTEENG IN MY COUNTRY. BUT NO ONE EVER COMES HERE! WHO--WHO CAN EET BE?



I WEEEL NOT LET ANYONE SHOOT IN THEES LAND. EET BELONGS TO ME! I WEEEL STOP THEM!

I WONDER WHO EET EES?

FRIGHT ETCHED ITS ACID CONTOURS ON MAD MIKE'S STUBBLE BEARDED FACE AS HE FLED WILDLY THROUGH THE MOSS-HUNG BAYOU COUNTRY...

THEY'RE COMIN' NEARER. I CAN HEAR 'EM. BUT WHEN THEY GET TOO CLOSE I'LL TURN AND BLAST THEM!



GIVE UP, MAD MIKE! WE HAVE YOU...

NEVER CATCH ME... ALIVE!

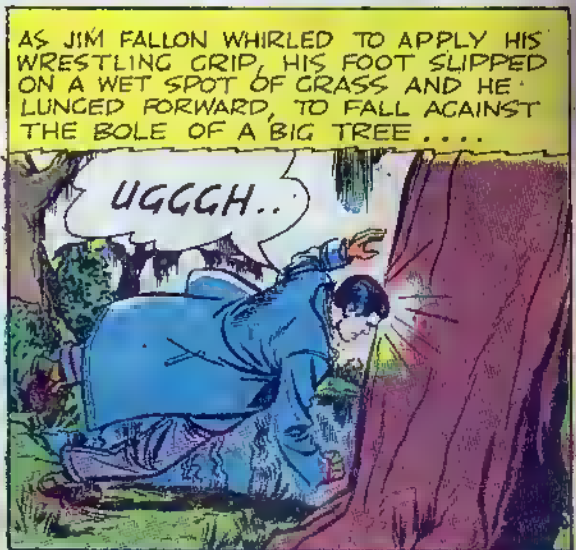
BUT I'LL CATCH YOU--DEAD!

UGGGH!

YOU MURDERING WHELP!



MANHUNT



MANHUNT

MADDENED BY FEAR, MAD MIKE PLUNGED ACROSS THE SHALLOW BAYOU WATERS...

IF HE -- GETS ME -- IT'LL BE THE 'LECTRIC CHAIR -- FOR ME! ME, THAT'S ONLY KILLED NINE GUYS -- WITH ONE MORE TO GO TO MAKE IT TEN!

A MAN! I -- I'VE NEVER SEEN A MAN BEFORE --

WELL, I'LL BE --! A DAME! AND WHAT A DAME!

WHO ARE YOU?

I'M MIKE MAKLE, CUTE STUFF. BUT WHAT'S A NUMBER LIKE YOU DOIN' IN THIS JUNGLE?

I LIVE HERE. I HAVE NO PEOPLE. ALWAYS I HAVE LIVED ALONE.

SWELL! ME'N YOU'LL GET ALONG OKAY. JUST TAKE ME TO THAT PLACE YOU LIVE!

IF YOU ARE A MAN --- I DO NOT LIKE MEN!

NONE OF YOUR LIP, KID. JUST GRAB THAT POLE AND START POLIN'! I DON'T WANT THEM G-MEN TRACIN' MY FOOTSTEPS!

OH!

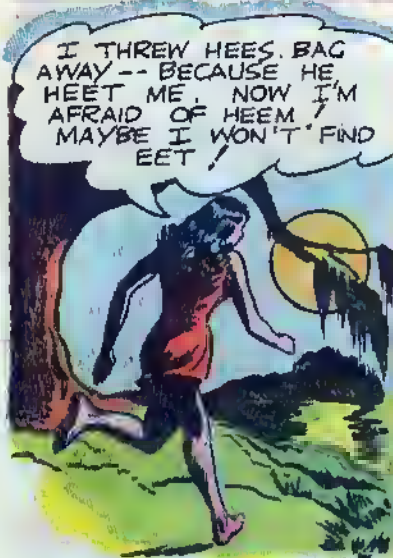
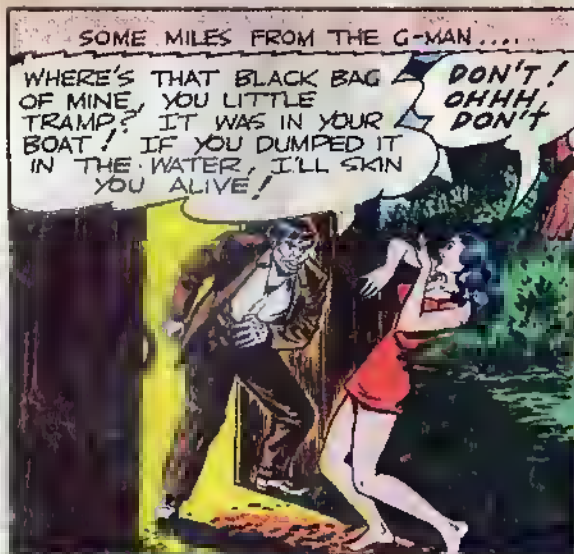
THAT NIGHT, AS THE SOUTHERN MOON RISES HIGH ABOVE THE MAIDEN CANE AND CYPRESS ---

IT'S NO USE. I'LL NEVER FIND HIM HERE. HE CAN BE MILES AWAY, WALKING THROUGH THE WATER, LEAVING NO FOOTPRINTS!

AIEEE

WHAT--! THAT WAS A GIRL SCREAMING! BUT, WHAT GIRL COULD BE IN THESE BAYOU SWAMPS?

MANHUNT

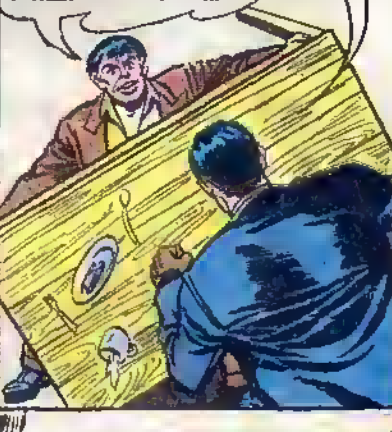


MANHUNT!

SOME TIME LATER THE DOOR OF LETTY'S LITTLE SHACK BANGED OPEN...



FINDIN' ME WON'T DO NO GOOD! YOU'RE CONNA MAKE DEAD CUY NUMBER TEN!



WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT!

I'LL TRADE YOU--TWO HEELS FOR ONE!



AND COME AND GET YOU RIGHT NOW!

YOU'LL GET THIS FISH HARPOON IN YOUR CHEST, G-MAN!

NO! NO!

LETTY LEAPS FORWARD, HURLS HERSELF STRAIGHT AT THE GLITTERING HARPOON-HEAD! HER MOUTH TWISTS BACK, SHE SCREAMS --GURGLS-- CHOKES----



AAAAGH!



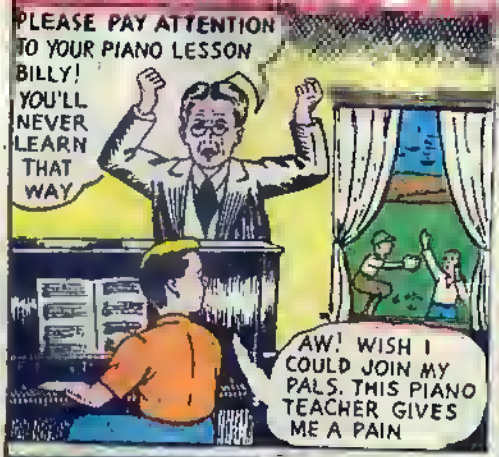
YOU MURDERING MUCKER! I'D LIKE TO TAKE YOU APART WITH MY BARE HANDS!

AT DAWN, FEDERAL AGENT JIM FALLON BURIED WILD LETTY, GIRL OF THE SWAMP AND BAYOU, AND MARKED HER GRAVE....



YOU WERE HIS TENTH MURDER VICTIM, BUT HE'LL PAY FOR YOU, LETTY! I'LL SEE TO IT! I PROMISE -- SO YOU'LL KNOW ALL MEN AREN'T LIKE--HIM!

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Jim dropped the rope, jumped for his gun. His hunting hand found it, lifted it. Bent at the knees, body leaning forward as he had been trained, he sent bullet after bullet through the night—into the man who had hit the ground less than ten feet from him!

A bullet ricocheted from the stucco wall behind him. Another ripped the sleeve of his coat.

And then the man in front of him tumbled forward, his chest a red smear where the G-man's bullets had etched a pattern. He made a sodden sound on the tile as he fell. His automatic clanged.

Jim went forward, turned him over. He glanced at his face and muttered, "Tiny Taccio, one of Red Febler's mob. That ties in to what we already know about Death, Inc."

Karen was breathing easier, her head leaning back against the wall. She smiled bravely. "If you hadn't been here—" she closed her eyes and shivered.

"We've beaten them, at any rate," the G-man smiled, looking down at his wristwatch. "Ten minutes to midnight, and their killer's dead."

Fallon did not see the hard eyes that gazed at them from a little window. He did not hear the man as he moved away on rubber-soled shoes, nor did he hear the slither of the long-edged knife slipping from its sheath.

For a moment the man stood in a beam of moonlight, his finger touching the tip of the stiletto, his hard lips curving in a cruel smile.

He murmured, "I'll have to kill them *both*, now. The G-man knows too much, already."

The man slid around a corner of the room and crept silently down the long flight of stairs.

* * *

Karen was on her feet, now. She breathed slowly, forcing herself to be calm by sheer will-power. She whispered, "There isn't anything more to be afraid of. Nothing more. You killed the man they sent."

Fallon patted her hand. "I killed him . . . but it's you that I'm thanking for the chance. Without your help, I couldn't have brought Tiny down. We—the F. B. I.—know he's a member of the Febler gang. I've a hunch we can make Red sing when we track him down."

Karen shuddered. "That awful Death, Inc. . . . every time I think of them, I see red!"

"Red letter day," said Fallon grimly. "A letter . . . then creeping death . . . then red blood . . ."

It had been that way since the beginning, when Death, Inc. had made their first killing. A mailman brought a letter to a wealthy man, and after that the killer came, slipping through a cordon of police as though he were invisible. Two more deaths followed in that first year. There were four the second year.

Death, Inc. grew bolder. Eleven was their total in their third year. Now they were starting again. . . .

Fallon had an arm under her elbow, walking with her to the hacienda gateway. He was saying, "—but all that's over, now. With this new information we have a chance to grab Febler and question him."

Something heavy flew through the air. It hit Karen on the back of her skull, toppling her forward.

From the corner of his eye, just before the arm tightened on his neck and the naked knife glittered in the air above his throat, Fallon saw the huge stone that had dropped the girl. Blood on it and hair . . . a red letter day . . .

The knife came down and stabbed—

Fallon twisted in the mugging grip, frenziedly arching his back, driving down with his legs. He turned his body, got the knife in the shoulder-lapel of his coat. The knife drove through, cut into his shoulder. The man with the arm about his neck was panting, sobbing with effort.

The G-man dropped. He fell straight down and hit the tiled patio floor. But the mugger was off-balance, and fell over him.

Fallon whirled and leaped. He parried the darting dagger with a wrist, slammed a left fist into the man's face. A beam of moonlight showed the other's features to the battling Federal agent. He grinned. "Mugger Marcotti!"

The Mugger cursed hotly and slammed a knee at Fallon's jaw.

Fallon rolled free. He brought his right fist up in a short arc. It hit the Mugger under the jaw, snapped his head back until it touched his spine. The Mugger tried to scream but only a choked gurgle came out of his battered mouth. He went back and out.

Fallon whirled and knelt beside Karen. His hand touched the blood on her yellow hair. "Just a scratch," he breathed with relief. "But I'll take her to a doctor, to make sure."

Her eyes fluttered open, stared up at him. She whispered, "What . . . was it?"

He told her, gestured at the unconscious Mugger. She murmured, "The Mugger, yes. I've seen pictures of him in Rogue's Gallery!"

Fallon nodded, "This breaks the case for us. The Mugger is Red Febler's right-hand man, but he'll spill if we offer him immunity to turn State's evidence!"

Karen's eyes shone brightly. "It's after midnight, Fallon! Death, Inc. has failed—for the first time."

"—And the last time!" Fallon added grimly. "From this night on there won't be any Death, Inc. Like all crime and criminals, it will fold up—because crime never pays!"

The End

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